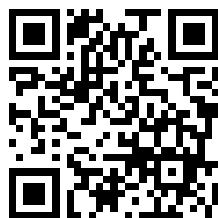
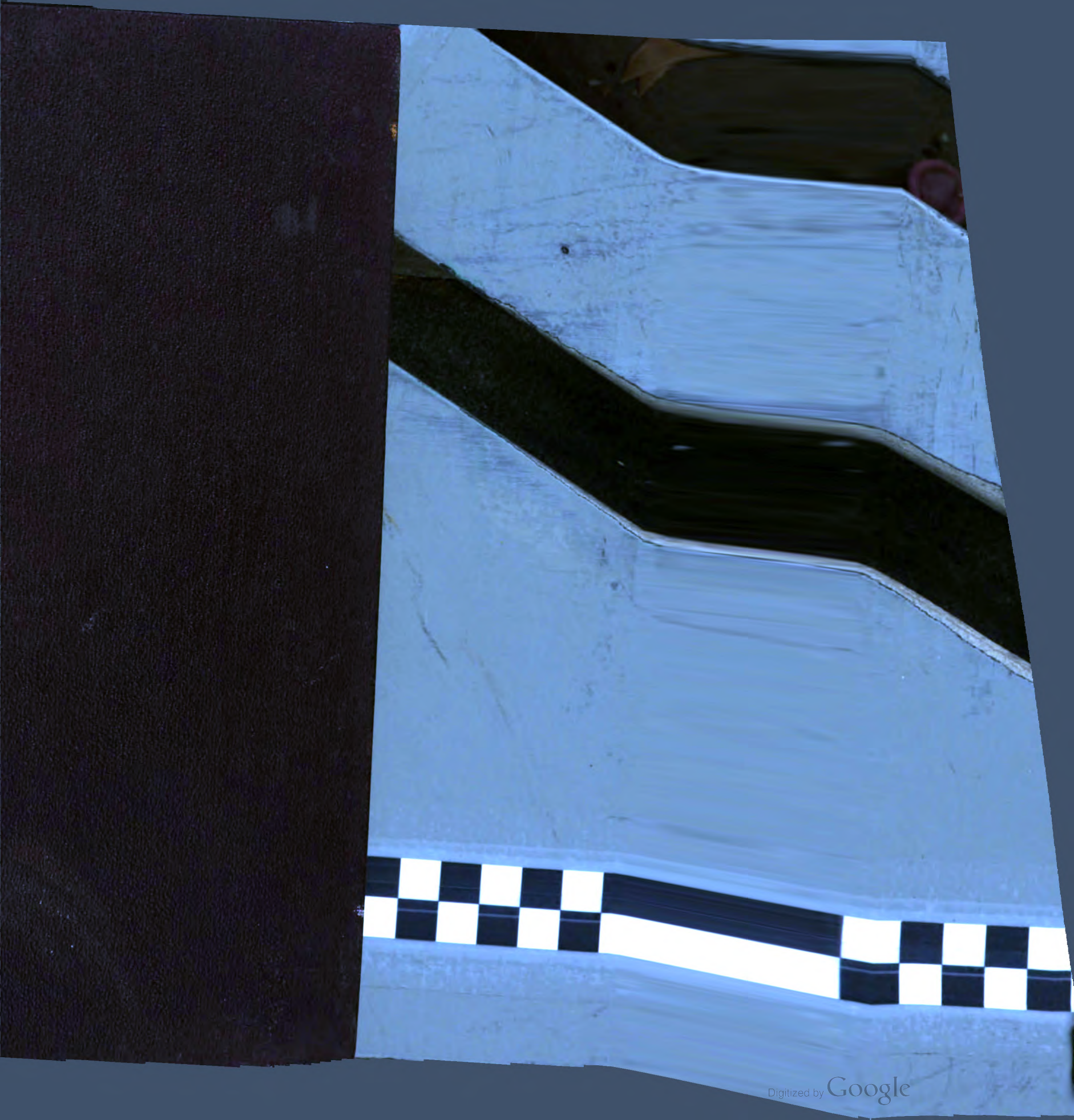

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THE NOVEL MAGAZINE

VOL. III.

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Our First Birthday—Hints to Would-be Contributors.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE NOVEL MAGAZINE is just a year old. This is our first Birthday Number. It is a hale, hearty youngster, in spite of its youth, and remarkably strong on its legs. When it first appeared in the *Magazine World* it was with the avowed intention of becoming a personality, and I think we can fairly claim that it has done so. It struck out a new and original path as a fourpenny all-story magazine, in order to meet the demand for first-class fiction at a moderate price, and the result has more than justified its existence. As *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE* grows older it will become still more attractive, for there are several surprises up the editorial sleeve.

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I should like to say a few words to would-be contributors on the subject of *How NOT to Write Stories*.

I have been greatly struck lately in reading the MSS. submitted to me by the manner in which some of the writers go out of their way to invent intricate and ponderous sentences when simple ones would be far more to the purpose and infinitely more euphonious. Here is an instance of what I mean. In a short story lately submitted to *THE NOVEL*, the following sentence occurs :

"But he did not accuse himself of folly; self-accusation was for fools. Instead, he gripped his emotions and with eury strength drew them ruthlessly from the fastnesses of a locked heart where they had been hiding, exposing them in the misbegotten temerity of ignorance to the fierce rays of his own ridicule."

Comment is needless, the sentence speaks for itself. It would pass for an illustration of one of Shakespeare's titles: "*Much Ado About Nothing*."

In straining after effect, young writers are apt to become high-flown. Their heroines never sit down—they "sink into a chair." When they are angry they never talk like other people—they "hiss." They do not walk, but "glide"; they never eat a meal, but "partake of a repast," and so on.

A writer of this kind, if he wanted to say, "An old woman went to market," would find himself putting "An elderly dame hied her to the place where provisions are exposed for sale," or something equally foolish.

Here is a sentence from an actual MS. which illustrates another common fault—that of using absurd and high-flown similes, which so often spoil the pathos of a story :

"He looked at me for a second as a sheep gives a last look at a butcher, and then he dropped on the floor."

Here the writer wants to be dramatic, but only succeeds in being grotesque.

There is nothing more effective than a really good simile. Ruskin uses a beautiful one when he speaks of fine architecture as "frozen music"—there is a whole poem in the idea. One of my contributors used a very apt one the other day in the following sentence :

"He was a fellow politician—a noted man, but a rush-light near an electric arc lamp as compared with his chief."

Kipling speaks of "the plop of a water-rat that sounded like the fall of a log in the water." This is very expressive.

But a simile must be appropriate and not far-fetched, or it completely mars a sentence. Better omit it altogether than use an ineffective one.

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I want to draw your attention to our new serial, "*Reaping the Whirlwind*," which begins this month. It is a magnificent story and breathlessly exciting. All our serials are read, not only by one, but by several readers, both masculine and feminine, so that every point of view is studied. "*Reaping the Whirlwind*" is most original in plot and treatment, and is a strenuous story from start to finish.

Mr. Edwin Pugh, the well-known novelist, is a painter of wonderful word pictures, and in this story uses very vivid colours with striking effect. The reader can almost feel himself a participator in the scenes described with such realism.

The Image and the Man. ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By EDWIN PUGH.

A CERTAIN derelict idea, in the course of its aimless wanderings, drifted into Popney, a suburb of London, and there took refuge in the head of Stephen Parsonage, the Mayor. It was rather a good idea. Its vagabond habits had been forced upon it by a grievous lack of means of support. Again and again it had taken up its abode in seemingly promising quarters, only to be rudely expelled just as it was making itself comfortable. So it entered the head of the Mayor of Popney in quite a desperate mood.

But soon it began to approve its new habitation. You see, it was a lively idea, a bustling imp of a notion; it needed plenty of room, and the Mayor's head afforded it all the space it required. The only ill—and that a minor one—from which the idea suffered was loneliness.

It was on a chilly evening in August that it first made its presence known to the Mayor. Stephen Parsonage had taken an uncommonly good dinner. He was sitting over his port and a blazing fire, with a mellow softness about the corners of his mouth born of repletion, when he felt a new sensation—the sensation of an indefinite something waking into life within his brain.

He started. His fat white hand fell heavily on his knee. He lapsed into a reverie.

From this he was aroused by the entry of a soft-footed man-servant, who came to replenish the fire. Mr. Parsonage gazed on the kneeling figure.

"Barclay," he said softly.

"Yessir."

"Barclay, I've got an idea."

"Indeed, sir!" in a surprised voice.

"Yes," said Mr. Parsonage. And he rubbed his shining pate with a silk bandanna, as if to keep the idea warm. A while later he went to bed.

On the morrow he journeyed into the City and called on his nephew, Harry Sagar, a young man who could not write, but did.

"Harry," he began graciously, "I have come to ask your opinion. I want your advice."

"I fancy not," said Harry.

"But I do," the Mayor protested. "I want your very best advice. You understand these things. I don't." This he uttered with pride.

"There are only two kinds of advice," said Harry. "Good advice and bad. Good advice is that which a man gives. Bad advice is that which he receives."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said his uncle. "Not that it matters, of course. What I want to ask you about is this." He paused. "I've been reading a good deal about Art lately, and it would seem that Art is in rather a bad way. Now it seems to me, as a public man, that I ought to do something to give Art a leg-up. There's Bill Wakelin, now, over at Stepton, been and had himself done in oils, eight foot by five and a half, in a ten-inch gold frame, and got it stuck up in the Town Hall. And him only a councillor!"

"I see," said Harry Sagar. "You're going to have your portrait painted, too. Well, I know a man—he drinks, but——"

"Don't you run past yourself, Harry. I ain't going to do anything of the kind. No. I'm going to give an image to our parish church—real, solid marble, mind you. Subject to be chosen by the sculptor; but—naturally—sacred."

"Capital!" Harry exclaimed. "There's a chap——"

"Half-a-minute. If you think I'm going to put the job into one particular pair of hands you make a big error. That was never Steve Parsonage's way. No; when I was running up a house or

what-not I always invited tenders, and the contractor as sent in the most suitable got the job."

"But, my dear uncle, artists don't——"

"I know they don't. I ain't a-going to ask 'em to. My idea is this: Call a meeting, submit the scheme to the aldermen, get their views, and then offer a prize for the best image sent in. Anybody eligible to compete; no entrance fee. Only stipulation—real, solid marble, cost of same to be afterwards defrayed by me."

"Now, what I want you to do," he went on, "is to draw up a specification, or a prospectus, or whatever you like to call it, giving the brief outlines of my idea. I want it writ flowery to impress the fellows at the extraordinary meeting. Don't be afraid of a little Latin, or Greek, or any other foreign lingo. I shan't have to read it myself—couldn't. I was brought up sensible. But Gibbs'll do it all right."

"Poor old Gibbs!"

"Only shows you what education does," remarked Mr. Parsonage complacently. "There's Gibbs, he can jabber like a Barbary ape in any tongue you like to mention. And I happen to know his clerkship ain't worth half of anything to him."

"I said: 'Poor old Gibbs!'" murmured Harry.

The extraordinary meeting was called. The clerk read out the details of the Mayor's project. The aldermen and council were invited, first, to give their views, and then to vote.

"Do I understand," one Wrigge, inquired, "that these images will bear the signature of the competitor or not? I ask because, if the former is allowed, the judges might be influenced by a well-known name."

This was a poser. The Mayor looked helplessly towards his nephew.

"No names," whispered Harry.

"The point you raise, Mr. Wrigge," said the Mayor, "is one I've given a lot of consideration to. It ain't an easy one to settle off-hand. It may seem a small point to some——" He faltered.

("But it's small points that stick in," suggested Harry.)

"But it's small points that stick in," the Mayor repeated. This utterance evoked applause and laughter. "However, to be serious, gentlemen, I will answer Mr. Wrigge's query, once for all, in the affirmative."

"In the what?" shouted Wrigge.

"In the affirmative," the Mayor replied firmly; and sat down.

"May I ask," persisted Wrigge, "what our worthy Mayor means by saying that he answers my question in the affirmative? Does he mean that the image will be signed, or that it won't?"

"Tell 'em, Gibbs," said the Mayor.

Mr. Gibbs rose nervously. "I should have thought," he began, "that Mr. Parsonage's meaning would be plain to anyone." Then he paused. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"Go on," said the Mayor impatiently.

The voice of Harry Sagar breathed softly the words: "No names."

"No names, of course," said the clerk with unction, and withdrew to the back of the platform.

There was more light skirmishing before the Mayor's motion: "That a prize be given for the best piece of statuary, in real, solid marble, embodying some Biblical figure or incident," was put to the vote, and carried unanimously. A committee was appointed, with Mr. Parsonage as chairman, to discuss details, and, incidentally, a champagne supper.

The next issue of the *Poynsey Banner* contained a full report of the proceedings, together with an invitation—in leaded long primer—to the effect that statuary, complying with the undermentioned conditions, might be left at the vestry door of the parish church on any day before Michaelmas. A triumvirate of experts would be invited to adjudicate, and the result of the competition would be announced as soon as possible. This proclamation appeared also in many of the London and provincial papers. From end to end of the country there was a ferment of excitement in artistic circles. The *Times* indulged in some funny thunder; *Punch* made a pun. Indeed, the Mayor's idea lacked no element of success.

As Michaelmas Day drew near, cart after cart drove up to the vestry door. Straining giants, armed with levers and stout wooden rollers, carried huge, shrouded forms into the old grey pile. The three famous experts arrived, and began their task of adjudication. But soon there came a hitch. They sent a messenger to the Mayor, praying him to come to their aid. He was somewhat overwhelmed, and at once sought counsel of his nephew. "You must come with

me, Harry," he commanded. Together they went to the church.

They found the three great artists, dusty, damp, and depressed, sitting in the midst of what looked like a mason's yard.

"What's the trouble?" asked Mr. Parsonage briskly.

"You see," sighed Rivers R.A. dejectedly; "there's really only one man in it."

"Give him the prize, then," said the Mayor. "Seems to me——"

"But his statue does not comply with all the conditions. It's too small."

"Must stick to the conditions," said the Mayor firmly. "Which is the image?"

"This one." Rivers pointed to a statue representing the Christ. On the plinth were graven the words, *Ecce Homo*.

"H'm!" grunted the Mayor. "Don't fancy it myself. Hey, Harry?"

"Very fine! very fine!" said Harry.

"It is fine," said Rivers.

"Now this," said the Mayor, pointing to a statue of Solomon in all his glory, his brow bound with a jeweled fillet, his robes trailing down over the steps of an ornate throne, "this is more my mark."

"But," ventured another of the great men, "all this drapery may be, and probably is, a mere device to cloak the artist's lack of really high ability. He has shirked anatomical difficulties. To carve a perfect human form out of the living stone—that is the supreme test of genius. Let me call your attention to the face. We are shown a pretty—pretty young man of a type that is quite common in Regent Street——"

"And on the lids of bonbon boxes," Harry interpolated.

"Exactly," said the artist. "There is no character in this face. There is not even *scz.* Until we read the inscription we were doubtful whether the statue represented a man or a woman. Now, this figure of the Christ——"

The Mayor snorted. He was not used to being lectured; and he resented these artist-fellows' airs of self-sufficiency. "Our people'd object to so much of the body and legs showing."

"I should be sorry for your people," said Rivers quietly, "if I altogether credited that. But let me, Mr. Parsonage, point out to you some of the beauties of this fine work. See how the wasted body droops under the weight of the cross.

And yet—you will observe—there are still to be seen traces of a former muscular development such as one would naturally look for in the body of a man who had once lived by manual labour. The triceps——"

"I don't know anything about that," the Mayor broke in testily. "The statue's too small. The subject don't suit. And there's an end of it."

"I take it, then," said the third artist, a fiery-headed Celt, "that you do not accept our decision. You are within your rights, I suppose. The statue is—I use your word in the literal sense—too small. You prefer something big—and pretty. Good. It only remains for me to withdraw from the whole affair."

"In which case," said the two others, "we withdraw also."

"But, I say, look here," blustered the Mayor, "can't we come to some sort of a compromise?" He was very loath to lose these great men's support of his scheme. "How would it be to divide the prize? Give Solomon a hundred and fifty, and this other one a hundred. Hey? Here, Harry, you talk to these gentlemen. I can't get on with 'em." He stalked off into the body of the church.

Harry talked with the three great artists. He began by pointing out to them that his uncle was a very obstinate, very ignorant old man. This, the first idea he had ever been guilty of, was his first enthusiasm also. He would feel the thwarting of his plans as keenly as he was capable of feeling anything.

It was exceedingly unlikely that he would abandon his project. If the three judges fulfilled their threat of withdrawal the full prize would go inevitably to the perpetrator of this vulgar, facile statue of Solomon. The other man would get nothing in the way of reward. He would get neither money nor notoriety. But if the judges consented to adopt the Mayor's suggestion, only stipulating that the Christ should also be placed in the church, then the unknown genius would, at least—to put it loosely—"get a show."

"The public is an ass," said Harry; "but it is not quite such an ass as the unsuccessful would make out. It has never accepted me, for instance, at my own valuation. It may not rise at once to an appreciation of this fine work; but it will, in time. And, meanwhile, there are always the discerning few."

Thus he pleaded and reasoned with them; and he brought them, at last, to his way of thinking.

Old Stephen Parsonage pulled a wry face on hearing the judges' decision. "But," he reflected, "I can easily stick the thing in some corner where it won't be noticed." And he accepted the situation philosophically.

There were more meetings, more resolutions, motions, amendments, balloting. At last the two awards were made public.

Time sped. The presentation of the prizes was advertised to take place on the evening of the 1st of November. In the afternoon of that day the church would be thrown open to the public. There would be a short service, and afterwards the people, if they so desired, might inspect the two statues.

The morning opened dour and chill. A rolling brown fog filled the puddled streets. But towards noon the air lightened. Misty rays pierced the gloom, flooding the city with largess of pale gold.

The bells pealed out their invitation, drawing, from confines of close-packed tenements, hordes of black-coated men and curious women. Came from distant quarters of the town pallid camp-followers of Art. Came lords and ladies in carriages. Came quick-eyed, dapper journalists with bulging pockets and rakish hats. The organ droned; the service began; a bishop presided. He was a Colonial bishop, much in love with himself. He chanted a lullaby from the pulpit for three-quarters of an hour. When he had made an end, one-half of the congregation opened its eyes and nudged the other half indignantly. The pews emptied; the people formed in a long queue, filling the outer aisles.

The massive stone figure of Solomon stood in the chancel. The sunlight streamed down through a stained-glass window, falling athwart its gleaming proportions in a prismatic beam. The people gazed; and a sibilant sound of whispering rose up from among them. They moved along slowly towards the font near the porch, where, in a shallow embrasure, the imaged Christ drooped under the cross.

"*Ecce Homo!* That stands for, 'Behold the Man!'" Denser and ever denser grew the press about the statue.

"Behold the Man!" Not the man of tradition, crowned with laurels, happy,

triumphant; but the Man of God, wounded, bleeding, spat upon; insulted! The Man of many griefs and sorrows; the Man Who could, through the foulest abysses, still preserve unspotted the perfection of His manhood. "Behold the Man!"

There is a compelling quality in great art that must needs prevail always. The fat-witted Mayor had resisted the simple force of the work's appeal, viewing it in incongruous proximity to grotesque travesties of the beauty it alone expressed. Now, as he mingled with the mute throng that gazed with thirsty eyes on the wondrous thing that a man's God-given genius had carved out of shapeless rock, he felt, for the first time in his life, a quickening of the soul.

He was disturbed in mind and returned to the statue of Solomon for justification of his faith. But Solomon in all his glory mocked him from its pedestal. It had no form nor comeliness; the sight of it filled him with feelings of faint disgust. It was the supreme moment of the Mayor's life, had he but known it. But the pride of the flesh triumphed over the spirit. All that resulted was an access of petulant spleen. He climbed back over the pews towards the porch of the church. He stood, regarding the Christ over the heads of the people, dull scorn on his loose-lipped mouth.

No sound arose from the mass of gazers—save an occasional shuffling of feet—such as had arisen from the crowd gathered about the flaunting figure in the chancel.

Even the fish-blooded schoolmen felt a kindling of fire in their veins as they stood before that white miracle of loveliness, and were shorn of their shibboleths. Languid votaries of fashion—creatures of the mode of the moment—forgot to affect their customary poses.

The humbler folk, with swart, scarred hands, nobly adorned by the marks of toil, rejoiced, and were uplifted in the good knowledge that they, too, had performed—and would continue to perform—their part in the long expiation of the Almighty's primal curse. They perceived, in the blinding flashlight of their new self-revelation, how that, by their daily baptism of tears and sweat, they were surely working out their own redemption.

The Mayor, cowed, drained of his windy

conceit, peevishly ordered the verger to clear the church.

The people went with lagging feet. It was growing dark when the last reluctant loiterer departed. The leaded windows made patches of filmy blue in the grim, time-stained walls. The moon, an arc of argent light, shed a wistful radiance on the figure of the Christ.

* * * * *

Bright lights hanging from the roof. Blue-washed walls with pictured panels. Rustle and swish of silken draperies. A constant creaking of shoes as new-comers enter, or fussy officials scurry hither and thither. Hum and buzz of low-toned conversation. A bobbing and nodding of heads. Here and there, one in the audience, standing erect, signals to a friend afar off.

On the otherwise empty platform the haggard Gibbs is arranging chairs as for a Christy-minstrel entertainment. He places on the baize-covered table a water-bottle and a glass. The water-bottle contains white brandy. A lady in the front row hands up a big basket of flowers to Gibbs, which he also sets on the table. Then he disappears into an ante-room.

Presently, from this ante-room, issues a band of noble gentlemen in single file. They wear various insignia, ropes and chains, and heavy robes. They run a good deal to whisker, and are mostly of portly figure. There are thirteen of them, including the Mayor. He appears last, and is rapturously received. He bows, his shirt-front crackling, lines, as of latitude, girdling the globe of his body. He takes his seat in the mayoral chair. There is a hush. The aldermen put their heads together and murmur behind their hands impressively.

The Mayor rises to his feet, pours out a glassful of liquor, sips delicately.

He speaks. The aldermen lean back in their chairs and fold their arms, terribly.

Their purpose in meeting together in that hall (says the Mayor) is well known to all those present, and so there is no need for him to explain it to them. But he does explain it, and at some length.

After twenty minutes or so he is seen to put one hand behind his back, and heard to snap his fingers. Twice, thrice, he does this. Then he turns his back on his audience, and whispers fiercely: "Gibbs!" An alderman steals from the

platform and disappears through the open doorway of the ante-room. The flow of the Mayor's eloquence trickles ever more thinly.

At last Gibbs and the alderman appear, each carrying a silver casket.

"This casket," says the Mayor, taking the larger one in his hand, "contains my cheque for one hundred and fifty pounds and a solid gold medal presented by me. The money and the medal are both awarded to Mr. Ronald Gosworthy for his lovely statue of Solomon, which many of you, no doubt, had the privilege of seeing this very afternoon in our handsome parish church. Will Mr. Ronald Gosworthy kindly step forward?"

A young man, in evening clothes, rises from his seat in the third row, and moves towards the platform. He is a comely, up-standing youth, fair-haired, good-looking, sleekly-groomed. Gems flash on his fingers as he reaches up to take the casket from Mr. Stephen Parsonage.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Gosworthy, on your very nice image," says the Mayor.

The young man bows with easy grace, flushes becomingly, balances the casket in his two white hands, says "Thank you," modestly, and rejoins a bevy of excited, bare-shouldered ladies. The men applaud lustily. The women wave their handkerchiefs, so that the sea of heads is flecked with creamy foam.

"My second award," the Mayor continues, when the tumult has died down, "is given to Mr. Roderick Crome for his statue of 'Behold the Man!'" In this solid silver casket which I now hold in my hand is my cheque for one hundred pounds, and an illuminated diploma in green and gold presented by me. Will Mr. Roderick Crome kindly step forward?"

Silence falls. The Mayor's eyes range over the rows of restless heads.

"Mr. Crome," he says again.

Those at the back stand up. In the body of the hall and in the front rows there is much twisting of necks.

"Mr. Crome," the Mayor bellows. "Is Mr. Crome in the building?"

Still there is no response. A whisper thrills through the audience—a murmur as of breathing leaves. Several of the aldermen half-rise from their seats, crane their heads forward.

"Is any friend of Mr. Crome present?" asks the Mayor. His face is reddening;

his voice expresses irritability. "Come, come. There must be somebody here who knows Mr. Crome!" He drums on the table with his fingers. "This is absurd!" says Mr. Stephen Parsonage in an aggrieved voice.

The aldermen growl sympathetically. Members of the audience grumble aloud. It is generally felt that the unknown Crome is behaving unconscionably.

"Very well, then," says the outraged Mayor at last. "If this here Mr. Roderick Crome won't come forward, he won't, and there's an end of it. Question is, does he forfeit the prize?"

"Of course not," says Harry Sagar from his seat, and laughs derisively. But, "He does forfeit," cry others. And there is a great confusion of tongues, which endures for several minutes.

At last the Mayor bangs down the casket on the table in a pet. "I wash my hands of the whole affair," he declares. "But I must say that this is not what I expected after all the pains I've took and the money I've laid out."

It is a sad, a forlorn termination to what had promised to be a most brilliant function. The audience, strung up to revel in a succession of thrills, feels that it has been cheated. It feels as a playgoer might feel if the curtain refused to rise on the last act of an exciting drama.

The Mayor sulks in his chair of state. The aldermen gloom and glower behind him. One of them suddenly rises, a lean man of saturnine mien. He proposes a vote of thanks to their worthy Mayor in a voice that makes one fancy he must live on husks of swine. A little, round barrel of a man seconds that. An abortive attempt is made to sing "For he's a jolly good fellow!" Then the meeting breaks up. The audience disperses.

Harry Sagar seeks his uncle in the ante-room. Stephen Parsonage sits, drinking champagne, with a clouded brow. Clustered about him are the aldermen, one of them urging a plate of sweet biscuits on the Mayor's attention. He pushes the plate aside.

"Give me that there casket," he says to Gibbs suddenly.

He snatches it from the clerk's hands, opens it, takes out the cheque and the tawdry diploma. Carefully placing the two slips of paper together he tears them solemnly across and across and scatters the torn fragments on the floor.

It was at this crisis Harry pushed forward. "Uncle!" he exclaimed, "you ought to be downright ashamed of yourself."

"What!" roared the Mayor.

"Not that the stupid diploma matters," Harry went on. "And you can—as you will have to, of course—draw another cheque. But this silly exhibition of baulked vanity——!"

"What the dickens do you mean, sir?" the Mayor burst forth. "Come to that, what right have you in this room at all?"

"Oh, you are at liberty to turn me out!" said Harry. "But I should just like to say one or two things before the fight commences. In the first place, what is all the fuss about?"

"Dear Mr. Sagar," ventured one of the aldermen, laying a restraining hand on the hot-headed young man's arm.

"Shut up," said Harry, shaking him off. "I'm not talking to you. I say, what is all this fuss about?"

"You know, well enough," the Mayor mumbled.

"I know this," said Harry; "that because a man—an artist—has the good taste not to care to be made into a puppet show for the gratification of an old man's silly love of self-display, you are behaving like a child with a broken toy. Did you imagine that any man worthy the name—and especially such a man as he who achieved that statue must be—would tamely submit to treatment fit only for a Sunday school brat who has won a prize for good conduct! What modest man would—or could—suffer such an indignity? The personality of the artist has nothing whatever to do with the public. His work belongs to them by grace, whether they appreciate it or not. For recompense, the artist only asks that he may call his soul his own. And you would deny him that."

"What you say is all gibberish to me," said the Mayor wearily. "I wish you would go away and leave me alone."

"I will go away; but I will not leave you alone. You must come with me."

"Must!" sneered the Mayor.

"Ay!" said Harry, "I'm going to take you somewhere."

"What the——"

"Put on your coat and hat and muffler. Keep your jingling rubbish on. I'll tell you where we are going when we get outside. Rather, you shall tell me."

The Mayor tried to stand up against this overbearing nephew of his, tried to assume a look of awful dignity; but the younger man's greater force of character was too strong for him. He felt incapable of battling against it. He saw that any resistance on his part would but expose him to further humiliation. So, he rose meekly, donned his outdoor garb, and accompanied his nephew from the building.

"Now," said Harry, when they were in the street; "where does Crome live?"

The Mayor pondered.

"Delancey Lane, No. 4," he replied.

"Shall we take a cab?"

"A cab? Where to?"

"Delancey Lane, of course."

"But, my dear Harry, the place is a terrible slum."

"Well, and weren't you born in a slum?"

The old man winced. He was not proud of his lowly origin.

Harry hailed a cab. The night was damp and dark. The mists of the morning had reassembled. Each yellow gas-flare shone in the fog like a light seen through tears. It was a short journey. They wound through diverse shabby alleys and mews, and stopped at last in the shadow of an iron arch.

"It's down there," said the cabman, pointing out the entrance to a narrow, oozy lane.

They followed the direction of the cabman's finger, stepping gingerly through the clinging mud. On their right hand were the walls of mean backyards; on their left, a row of closed-in arches, built under the platform of a railway station, some of which were used as warehouses, some as stables, some as human dwellings.

"This should be the shanty," said Harry, and struck a match. The feeble flicker showed him a pale figure painted on a black background. He rapped on the door with the handle of his stick—there was no knocker or bell.

The Mayor, despite his warm clothing, felt his teeth chattering as they stood in the cold and darkness, waiting for an answer to their summons. It came at last in the person of a woman, who held in her hand a fluttering tallow dip, which she shaded from the wind with her fingers.

She was very young, but pale, and thin, and bent. Her dark eyes burnt in their hollow sockets like live embers. She wore

a scanty gown of some flimsy stuff that revealed painfully the sharp angularities of her figure. Her hair had the lustreless look that usually betokens ill-health. Yet she bore still on her woo-worn face some traces of a ruined beauty.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she asked, in a voice which was low and uncertain.

"This," said Harry, "is your worthy Mayor, Mr. Stephen Parsonage. I am his unworthy nephew. And we want to know if Mr. Crome lives here."

The woman laughed softly. She held the candle higher in her hand so that its light fell full upon their faces.

"Come in," said she. "I am Mrs. Crome—Roderick's wife."

"He is at home, then?"

"Oh, yes."

She laughed again. At that moment a gust of wind blew out the tossing candle flame. The Mayor clutched his nephew's arm as the door slammed to behind them. It was very dark. High up in the wall was a window, shaped like a huge fan-light, and showing as a pallid patch of dull grey against the fog outside.

"Have you a match?" asked the voice of the woman.

Harry struck a match and relit the candle. Its rays filtered slowly through the gloom, revealing a bare, ugly chamber with a high-arched roof. The floor of hard, trodden earth, was littered with dry chips of marble. Propped drunkenly against the walls, nosing the dirt, perched on shelves, on yellow-pine boxes, and rickety oddments of furniture, were clumsy stone shapes, whole figures of gods, and men, and beasts, broken fragments, torsos, limbs, busts, an unfinished urn, a headless nymph. Some of the figures were swathed in cloths; these were, presumably, wet clay models. All this seen very dimly in a wavering, smoky glimmer.

"Sit down, gentlemen," said Mrs. Crome, dragging forward two battered chairs; and herself sat down on one of the yellow-pine chests.

"You say that your husband is here?" queried Stephen Parsonage.

"Yes; but he is asleep just now."

"He knows that his statue has won a prize?"

"Oh, yes; he saw it in the newspaper."

"Ah!" said the Mayor; "your husband is a lucky man."

The woman smiled inscrutably. There was an awkward pause.

"Pr'aps," suggested the Mayor, "if I sent someone round in the morning—hey!"

"No," said she. "I should like you to see him now. He is sleeping over there, in that dark corner. Come."

She rose and walked slowly, shakily, across the vast, black chamber.

"Hush!" she breathed. She stooped down beside one of the clay casts, unwound the wrappings from, and showed them, a still, white face.

But it was no face of stone that the woman laid bare. It was the face of a dead man—a face of great nobleness. Kindliness and strength were expressed on it, and an infinite, long-suffering patience.

The woman stooped and kissed the dark lips tenderly.

"This is my dear husband," she said. "Asleep."

Harry Sagar felt his eyes grow cold, as if they had been filled with frozen tears. But his brain burnt, and he could hear plainly the throbbing of his heart, as it threshed his warm life-blood. Yet he preserved an outward self-possession. He touched the poor, crazed girl-wife on the shoulder.

"Best not to wake him," he whispered in her ear.

As he spoke he heard a gurgling sound behind him, and, turning, saw that his uncle was fighting for his breath. His face was purple. He clawed the air. Harry ripped open his shirt at the collar, led him, shuddering, back to the centre of the chamber, thrust him down into a ragged arm-chair. He stood over the old man until he had somewhat recovered; though he still sat, inert and still, his fleshy chin buried in his breast.

All this while the woman, oblivious of what was passing, hung over the dead body of her husband.

Once more Harry touched her on the shoulder.

"Come," he said, "tell me about it."

She looked up at him with a radiant face. "He sleeps soundly," said she. "That is good for him. Shall we let him sleep? Yes, we will let him sleep."

She replaced the rags, rose weakly from her knees, and tottered to her seat on the yellow-pine chest. She clasped her wasted hands between her knees, her shrunken young body swaying to and fro.

"He will be a great man now," said she. "He said to me, 'I shall be ever such an important person now, Tip.' He calls me Tip, Tip! That was when we first read about it in the newspaper. We went out that night and he took me to dine at a little place in Compton Street. It was sweet. He said the smell of the garlic made him think of Italy, and the old days of his wander-year, when he was a beautiful, careless boy.

"He made love to me that night as we walked home together in the star-shine; though, of course, we had been married quite a year then, and there was his work to do, and not much time for playing with my curls. But when he was in despair because the things would not come, then I would go to him and make him less sad. I could nearly always make him smile out of those wonderful eyes of his. 'You witch!' he used to say, 'You witch!' He would put his arm round my waist, and we would dance till he was tired.

"But sometimes he would mourn and say that we ought not to have married. He was wild—a little—at such times. He would call himself dreadful names, and he would take me on his knee, and push back my hair and kiss me. I did not know if I was glad or sorry. I was glad for him to love me so. I was sorry to hear him say such cruel, harsh things of himself, and to feel his hot tears on my cheek.

"But never mind, Tip,' he used to say, 'I'm bound to attain some day. And then I'll take the world by the nose; I'll wring its nose till it bleeds gold. You shall have gay dresses and jewels only less bright than your own eyes. And I will be an English squire, all of the olden school. But we won't forget the others, will we, Tip—those others who are still as we are now. We will rout them out and help them. We will storm their strongholds with chicken and jelly, and bright-red wine, just when they least expect us, when their cupboards are bare, and their hearts are sick.'

"Then we heard of the good Mayor's kind idea to help us. The one trouble was that we had no money. There was only his mother's ring. She had been a very fine lady, and the ring was of diamonds and rubies and emeralds. 'I must sell it,' he said, and added a jewel from his eyes to the other jewels. 'It must go, Tip, if only for the cupboard's sake.' He went out

one morning and came back without it. But he was able to buy the marble that day. And then he was happy again, for he could work. He worked always. Chip! Chip! Chip! In the night he would often get up and look at the statue, standing there like a ghost in the moonlight. As soon as it was day he would be up and dressed, and I would make him a bowl of soup, and he would begin again.

"But he was always good and kind to me. He never forgot that I was sitting there. 'Now, Tip,' my dear used to say to me, 'you go out for a run and bring back some roses.' And that was lucky for me, because, you see, I could go and help the neighbours with their work, and so earn money. They gave me pieces of bread, too, and meaty bones for my stock-pot. I bought tobacco with part of the money, and rolled cigarettes for Roddy to smoke in the evening.

"He finished the statue at last. But we could not think how to get it to the church. But I thought of a way.

"There was a jobmaster two doors away, Mr. Daffy. He was always trying to make love to me, which I would not permit——" Abruptly, she paused.

Harry felt that never had he witnessed a thing so moving as the pathetic air of dignity with which she uttered those last words.

"But I pretended," she went on, "and I got him to promise to take the statue in his cart if I would give him a kiss. That was not a sin, was it? He did take it to the church, and I met him in the lane afterwards. I put my hands behind me and held up my face for the one little kiss. Oh, but he was unkind! He put his arms round me and kissed me—not once, but many times, holding me tight in his hard, strong arms. But I got away from him at last. . . .

"I did not tell my dear," she went on; "he would have killed Mr. Daffy. He is so very brave and fierce. And he was ill, now that the statue was finished. He lay down and did not care to move. I watched beside him, lying there. But when he was sleeping I could go and help the neighbours.

"Then we heard about his winning the prize. We had the newspaper every day after that. But day after day passed, and, though there was always something about it—some meeting and speeches—there was never any news to please him,

no mention of when the prize would be given. Until a week or two ago. Ah, that morning! He sat up in bed and read it. 'Only twelve days, Tip!' he said. 'Twelve days. And then——'

"But it was a long twelve days, and he was very ill. And I could not always give the neighbours satisfaction. Once I fainted while I was scrubbing. They said I was too weak for my job. But it wasn't that. It was the strong smell of the soap-suds.

"We went to the church together this afternoon, and I held his hand in mine as we stood before his statue. The people were saying how wonderful it was. At first he was pleased; but soon he said they were stupid, these people. None of them guessed who he was. His clothes were old and patched, and I hadn't a hat fit to wear. There was one odd thing happened. The man outside the church would not let us in at first; but I pleaded so hard he gave way. You should have seen Roderick laugh at that. He squeezed my hand and whispered that it would be a bit different soon.

"When we got outside the church he was very tired, and had to lean on me all the way home. 'I feel a bit knocked up, Tip,' he said. 'A bit knocked up, Tip, I think I'll have forty winks—forty winks!'—wasn't that droll?—'before the evening comes.' And he lay down there and went to sleep.

"I heard the church bells ring out the hours until it was time for us to start. I tried to wake him, but could not. I spoke to him; I stroked his hair; I bent and kissed his hand. Ah! it was so cold, for we had no fire. I kissed his lips; they were cold, too. So I wrapped him up and warmed him with my body, and did not disturb him any more.

"Will you wake him? He sleeps very soundly!" She laid her hand on Harry Sagar's arm. "Will you wake him?"

Harry had no words left. His errant, distracted gaze fell upon the figure of Stephen Parsonage. The old man had crawled across the damp floor, the glittering insignia of his office trailing in the dirt, his collar poking up ridiculously at the nape of his neck, thrusting out a tuft of stringy grey hair. He came slowly, painfully towards them till he reached the dead man. Then, still kneeling, with closed eyelids, and trembling, uplifted hands clasped together, he prayed.

Tales of My Clients.

* * By A LADY PHOTOGRAPHER.

Edited by GERTIE DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES.

Beatrice Hannel, an officer's daughter, opens an art-photographic studio in Kensington as a means of adding to her slender income. She here tells some of the most fascinating romances in which, through her clients, she has been concerned. Each story is complete in itself.

I.—The Unseen Picture.

TAP—TAP.

"Come in."

Miss Thorne, my head reception clerk, entered the small study where I was sitting, busily thinking about everything except photography. (There are times when one feels so utterly weary of one's own occupation!)

"A lady—Miss Maud Rondel—wants a panel vignette taken, immediately if possible, please," she said, standing tall, elegant, silk-trained, and chilling in the doorway.

"Ask her to make an appointment for to-morrow," I replied, feeling that I had had enough of human physiognomy for one day.

"I have done so, Miss Hannel, but she is particularly persistent. Perhaps it *would* be as well to take her to-day, if you are not feeling very tired?"

My receptionist's voice so clearly reminded me of the facts that the rent of my studio was somewhat alarmingly high, that electric light bills have an awkward knack of always being, at least, £10 more than is expected, and that I had hardly been established long enough to put off the earning of useful yellow guineas; so, feeling the justice of her unspoken reproof, I replied that I would be with Miss Rondel in five minutes.

When I entered the artificially-lit inner waiting-room—the sea-green decorations of which Lady Besamy had just been condescending enough to copy in her boudoir—it was to find a tall and singularly beautiful girl sitting in a shady corner by the high mantelpiece, where only the light from the fire played on her exquisite features. She was gowned in black, and though none of her garments were particularly good or particularly fashionable, everything she wore seemed stylish and distinctive. She was

undoubtedly one of those women who invest clothes with an exclusive *personal* charm.

"Good afternoon. You wish for a panel picture of yourself?" I began, inhaling with pleasure the faint odour of some Eastern perfume which clung about her last season's furs.

"Yes, please, and—and I want you to do the very best with me you possibly can," she replied, in a voice that was very sweet, but just a little tired.

"I don't think much effort on my part will be required to make an eminently artistic picture," I answered, with sincerity as well as diplomacy.

My prospective sitter smiled, and as one daring gleam of firelight flashed across her face I felt an enthusiastic pleasure in the task before me.

Miss Maud Rondel certainly ought to make a "show" picture—one of those productions which decoy snub-nosed women by the score, and cause them to feel convinced that the photographer's art is omnipotent!

But when we reached the studio, where brutal high lights tell nothing but the truth, I saw that the one I had regarded as a girl, was a woman—a woman several years older than myself.

Her figure, eyes, and smile were all that they had seemed in the gentle, shaded gloaming; but fine networks of wrinkles were visible here and there; a liberal application of powder supplied the lost bloom of youth; and about the beautiful features there was a certain definiteness and sharpness which is only left by the years that have gone.

"You'll have to make more effort than you thought at first to produce an eminently artistic picture, won't you?" she said suddenly, with a whimsical bitterness in her voice.

I turned away and adjusted a curtain in order to hide the fact that I was blushing. It was so humiliating to feel that my thoughts had been read in this embarrassingly accurate fashion.

"I—I don't quite understand, Miss Rondel," I replied with brisk untruthfulness.

But my sitter only smiled kindly—a smile of disbelief.

"Do you wish to be taken in a hat or without?" was my next remark.

A moment's pause, then Miss Rondel moved nearer and, with an impulsive gesture that was hardly English, laid her hand upon my arm.

"I came to you instead of going to one of your masculine colleagues because I somehow felt that, being a woman, you would understand—and now that I've seen you, I *know* you will understand!" she cried.

This recognition of my sympathetic temperament pleased me, and I hastened to show appreciation of the undeveloped compliment.

"Thank you—yes, I believe that matters of sentiment *are* within my comprehension," I answered, feeling a sudden resentment towards the years that had robbed my companion of the immaturity which is a woman's best asset.

"Then I will tell you all. I want my portrait made to look as I looked eight years ago, because it is going to be sent out to India—to a man who loved me and parted from me when I was twenty-two. It was impossible for me to join him out there, and his return has been delayed season after season; but when he *does* come home we shall marry, because—almost impossible to credit it!—we have both kept faithful!"

"That is beautiful!" I murmured, feeling an involuntary envy of this happy woman who could hold a man's heart across the seas for ninety-six long months!

"Yes, it *is* beautiful," she repeated, "but sometimes I am almost afraid how it will be when he sees me again! I—I have altered so much—so *piti*fully much! There are days when I look in the glass and wonder what he will say—what he will think! But," resolutely abandoning her tone of dreamy retrospection, "I must not waste any more of your time in the luxury of detailing my own sensations. What I want, Miss Hannel, is this—a portrait taken to-day and touched up—'faked' I believe is the correct term—to make me look like *this*!" Here she produced a portrait of

herself dressed in the fashions of seven years ago—the portrait of a girl who, at *that* time, had not learnt to be a woman!

"There won't be a great deal of faking needed," I began, but the lie was feeble, so I gave it up and promised to do my best.

"I shall send it to him in reply to a letter I have just received—a letter saying that he longs for a photograph of me as I am to-day," she went on, almost seeming as if she were speaking to herself, after the fashion of people who are forced to live companionless lives. "Of course when he *does* return to England he must see all—all there is to see—but it will not be yet, so let him believe me to be what I am not for just a little while longer!"

How I longed to warn her against this dangerous game of deception! But being a photographic artist, and not a moral mentor, I busied myself with selecting a suitable background and arranging my plates.

At last everything was ready; then I began to pose this woman with the gorgeous hair and tired eyes, and before I arranged the first position I realised that an artistic treat was in store for me.

Maud Rondel couldn't help falling into absolutely graceful attitudes, while "the self-conscious mouth" (which is a photographer's greatest trial) was entirely absent in her case.

Her lips parted naturally, her eyes gazed steadily without the customary glacial stare, her hands knew what to do with themselves, and her figure seemed specially adapted for leaning against hollow sun-dials, or bending over fragmentary balustrades.

The too many years did not matter—my re-toucher could banish those with the skilfulness of death!

"Now, Miss Rondel," I said, when I had pressed the pneumatic ball for about the tenth time, "I think I can set you at liberty, and if you will call in about two o'clock the day after to-morrow, I quite hope that a finished picture will be ready for you to send by that day's mail—Friday, is it not?"

"Yes, Friday," she replied. "Thank you very much, Miss Hannel, for all the pains you have taken. If—if you are interested I will let you know what Mr. Dufresyne writes about the picture. I ought to have an acknowledgment in about a couple of months," she concluded, with that wistful hesitation which denotes a craving for human sympathy.

"Please do tell me, I shall be more than

interested." And for once I absolutely meant what I said. (I wish I could always do so, but with photography as a profession it isn't possible! Human vanities, as well as human features, require such very judicious treatment!)

Punctually at two o'clock on Friday Miss Rondel made her appearance, and when I handed her the finished panel portrait she gazed at it without a word, while a strange expression of agony entered her eyes.

It was a picture of a girl, young with youth's illusions, and glad with the hopes of life's possibilities. Every line, every trace of weariness and hardness, had been erased by the magic touch of the "spotter's" brush.

An exquisite photograph, and one which might have been aptly termed "A study of girlish springtime."

"It is a beautiful—a beautiful, beautiful lie!" whispered Maud Rondel in a low, sob-thrilled voice. Then, with a desperate gesture that meant all a woman's vain regrets, she put the picture from her and laid it face downwards on the table.

"I—I can't look at it any more. Miss Hannel—I—th—think you understand!" she said, a short little laugh ending the sentence.

I only nodded. Professional disclaimers would not have fitted the situation.

"I shall send this off to-night," she went on resolutely, putting her emotions on one side, "and then, later on, I'll let you know how—how your most artistic production is received across the seas. Thank you very much—good-bye!"

And instead of the usual client-to-photographer bow, we shook hands and smiled into each other's eyes.

I always have had immense sympathy with romance, and I suppose this trait drew us together.

A fortnight later, when I had just been very busy with a hideous *débutante* in a delicious presentation gown, I was told that Miss Rondel was asking to see me. Quickly I entered the sea-green waiting-room and found my most satisfactory "sitter" standing by the fire in an attitude of strained impatience; and when she turned towards me I was horrified at the pallor of her face and at the dark rings beneath her eyes.

"Could you please let me see a copy of the portrait like—like the one I sent away? (You know I only had that one taken). Do you happen to have another copy?" she said in short, jerky accents.

"Yes, the picture was much too successful for me not to have kept a duplicate—here is one," I replied, stepping towards a small, draped easel which had evidently escaped her attention.

Almost roughly she seized the photograph and devoured it with her eyes, and without any warning she broke into a passion of unrestrained sobs.

"Oh! it is even worse than I thought," she moaned. "I have been hoping against hope that perhaps it was not quite so—so false, but it is—it is!"

"My dear Miss Rondel, do please tell me the cause of your distress," I answered, putting an arm about her quivering shoulders (we were just *women*—not merely client and photographer—at that moment!)

"Yes, I'll tell you," she replied, leaning back with the weariness that follows spent emotions. "Yesterday I received a letter fr—from India, saying that in a week from that date th—the writer would sail for England!—which means that within a month of the time he receives the photograph he will see the original! Miss Hannel, I don't know how to bear it—to bear his expression of consternation when he sees *my face*!"

"But he, too, will have changed and grown older!"

"Yes, but he has not sent me a pictured lie! He will be expecting to see the *girl* whose photograph will have reached him by now, and in a day or two he will sail—sail towards the *woman* who will disillusion all his hopes and beliefs!"

"But if he loves you—as his fidelity proves—Time's inevitable touches will not matter," I murmured.

"No, perhaps *they* would not have done—but my miserable lie will matter! If only I had not succumbed to the pitiful vanity of a *passée* woman he wouldn't have returned full of expectation. Ah! *If only he need never see that portrait!* But it is no good lamenting. It is done—he has seen, and *he will see!* Good-bye, Miss Hannel, and forgive me for wasting your time like this, good-bye."

And as she passed between the sea-green plush curtains I felt that I would give much to hear the end of the story—the story of a man's disillusionment and of a woman's broken heart.

* * * * *

Three months later, when many days and many events had almost erased the memory

of Maud Rondel, I received the following letter:

8 Birchfield Gardens,
W.

DEAR MISS HANNEL,

I have so often hoped we should meet again. I have not forgotten your sympathy—which is the greatest of human needs. Will you come to tea with me to-morrow afternoon? I so much want to introduce my husband to you.

Yours ever sincerely,

MAUD DUFRESYNE (*née* Rondel).

"Maud Dufresyne!"

So the picture-falsehood had not mattered after all! A man's love had forgiven—er—a *woman's wrinkles!* How noble!

Feeling mingled sentiments of romance and cynicism, I rang the bell at No. 8 Birchfield Gardens; but it was not long before the latter emotion was destined to hide its ignoble head.

With outstretched hands Mrs. Dufresyne came towards me, and I was startled at the change which had taken place in her.

It was the *girl* of my picture returned from Time's realms of long ago!

"I am so glad to see you," she said. "I have only just come back from Genoa, where our honeymoon was spent. And now I may introduce my husband. Roy, this is Miss Hannel!"

A tall man stepped out of the shadow, and then his wife *guided*—yes, he seemed unable to find his way alone—guided him towards me!

"Forgive my clumsiness," he said, with a

smile that was almost bewildering in its charm, "but my affliction is so recent that I haven't yet got used to it—ah! but perhaps Maud has not told you that she has consented to take a poor blind beggar for better or worse?"

"My husband lost his sight by means of an accident in India just three days before he received my portrait," she answered.

Our eyes met—and then I understood.

"Yes, and I can't quite say that I—I altogether regret my loss," continued Mr. Dufresyne, "because if it had not been for the accident I shouldn't have been pensioned off and sent home, and there's no knowing if Maud would have waited any longer! It's better to be without one's eyes than without one's heart," he concluded, pressing the slender hand that guided his arm.

For a second I could not answer. I was remembering those words uttered by Maud Rondel on the occasion of her last visit to my studio!

"If only he could never see that portrait!"

Well, her wish had been granted, and, like many fulfilled longings, there was pain in the fulfilment.

Then I looked towards them as they stood side by side in the early spring sunlight, and as I gazed all sadness left my heart.

They were happy; they were together, and to him she would always be a *girl!*

Fate had hidden the despoiling work of Time, and love did the rest.

(Next month will appear the strange story of "The Poet of West Hampstead.")

* * * THE SAILOR. * * *

BY P. G. WODEHOUSE:

The vessel may shake like a jelly,
The tempest may ruffle the sea;
The oil from the engines be smelly,
But, bless you, that don't affect me:
Such details are quite to my liking,
They cause me no worry or pain;
I feel like an up-to-date Viking,
Whatever the state of the main:

I know that full many a man 'll
Turn green when the anchor is weighed,
And assume in the chops of the Channel
Some even more curious shade;
Such words as "a ground swell" or "leeward,"
If you whisper them soft in his ear,
Will make him call out for the steward,
Explaining he feels rather queer.

Some find that their systems are shaken
If men in their presence should speak
Of the merits of oysters or bacon,
Or succulent bubble-and-squeak.
If you mention whipped cream in their hearing,
Small pleasure their faces will show;
You notice their backs disappearing
En route for the cabin below.

Myself, be the sea smooth or rougher,
From these sorts of woes I'm exempt:
I think of the people who suffer
With pity that's mixed with contempt:
And I owe my immunity merely
(A fact I've not mentioned before)
To avoiding the ocean severely:
I spend all my life on the shore.

The Rival Reporters.

By MALCOLM DAYLE.

The thrilling story of how two newspapers fought as to which should be first to announce the result of the English Football Cup-tie.

A DEAD silence, two bodies met with a crash, a foot shot out swiftly, the custodian of the goal reached frantically forward, the ball twisted under his arm and dropped neatly within the posts.

A whistle screeched out shrilly, then a prolonged roar from a vast multitude burst forth, Tellwell Rovers had won the match on the stroke of time by two goals to one, and were in the final for the English Cup-tie.

Long before the cheering that greeted the victory had subsided, a short, wiry, little man, with small goatee beard, pulled his squash felt hat hard on his head, dashed from the reporters' box, thrust himself fiercely through the small throng making for the gates, and jumped into a motor-car that was awaiting him.

From Tellwell Park, where the match had been played, to the High Street, was a full three miles, but barely five minutes had elapsed since the finish, when the car stopped with a jerk outside the offices of the *Tellwell Courier*. The little man jumped out, sprang across the pavement, and dashed inside the building.

He pushed open the door of the editor's room unceremoniously, a man stood with his mouth to a speaking-tube:

"Rovers 2-1!" jerked out the little man:

The man at the speaking-tube echoed the sentence, and sixty seconds later the *Courier* contained the result of the match and was selling like wildfire in the streets.

Tellwell is a large and important city some hundred miles to the north of the Metropolis; in the railway world it is famous for its large engineering works and its important junction; in the world of commerce for its iron and steel works; in the football world for its famous team, the Rovers; and in the world of journalism for the intense rivalry and bitter hatred existing between the two principal newspapers of the city—the *Dispatch* and *Courier*.

The *Dispatch* had been established some fifty years, and until comparatively recently had had a monopoly, but with the advent

of the *Courier* a bitter newspaper war had begun:

The latter paper was run by smart if not too scrupulous men; it had not the reputation for strict accuracy that the *Dispatch* possessed, but by judiciously copying the best of the features of their old-established rival, and filling in with artistic sensationalism, the paper was fast gaining ground, and the proprietors of the *Dispatch* viewed the situation with something approaching anxiety.

Both papers ran off a large evening edition, and competition was keen as to which should contain the latest news.

On the evening in which the story opens the *Courier* had published the result of the important cup-tie match ten minutes before the result had reached the office of the *Dispatch*.

In the editor's room of that paper Roland Garston was passing an extremely uncomfortable few minutes.

"I can't understand it, Garston," said the Editor. "You've shown plenty of smartness, or you wouldn't have been appointed chief football reporter, but to be ten minutes behind your rival, why," he added cuttingly, "the office-boy would have done better."

A flush of anger crept into the healthy-looking-face of the young journalist.

"I tell you I did all that I could, sir: Directly the result was known I was at the private telephone; I rang frantically but could get no answer. At the telegraph office on the ground it was the same. The wires had evidently been tampered with."

"If the wires had been tampered with how on earth did the *Courier* get the result?"

"I don't know. Just as the match was over I saw Maskell dash out and make for the gates, I couldn't understand it, but I was too busy to take much interest in him. As soon as I found I couldn't telephone or wire a message I borrowed a bike and came on here as fast as possible."

As he finished speaking, Goodacre, the News Editor, looked in.

"I say, Danby, have you heard how the *Courier* got the result?"

"No." Both men turned quickly towards the newcomer:

"Why, that little Yankee Maskell had a motor waiting outside the ground; they came along to the office at a pace of something like fifty miles an hour: It's a miracle no one was killed: I've just seen Collins, he's full of it; there's a rumour that the police are taking the thing up—several people only escaped death by the skin of their teeth."

"They ought to lock him up," snapped the Editor.

"Yes; but what I can't understand," said Goodacre, "is why he should have taken all the trouble when the telephone would have been infinitely quicker. By the way, Garston, how on earth did you fail with——"

"Wires cut!" said Garston laconically:

"Great Scott!" The News Editor whistled.

The Editor's thick eyebrows had contracted fiercely:

"I can tell you why Maskell took a motor, Goodacre," he said: "Garston couldn't get the result through because the wires were cut; the inference is that Maskell knew the telephone and telegraph were useless, and made his arrangements accordingly. You can take it from me that he and the other *Courier* people are at the bottom of this; it's not the first dirty trick they've played us, but it's not likely that we shall ever be able to lay the charge to them."

The Editor spoke correctly.

The wires were examined, and it was evident that they had been deliberately rendered useless, but despite every effort made by the police and postal authorities, backed up by a substantial reward offered by the *Tellwell Dispatch*, no trace could be found of the culprits:

They worked cleverly, did those smart men on the *Courier*.

It was the eve of the final for the English Cup, the whole football world was teeming with excitement, and in Tellwell nothing else was talked of; the question of whether the Rovers would win was the one thing that mattered:

Both the rival papers were full of football news; every action of each man in the team was recorded in black-and-white, and comments upon their "form" were many and varied.

The failure of the *Dispatch* to obtain the result of the semi-final to time had been a big blow to their sporting reputation, and everyone in the office, from office boy to Editor, felt that the only way to retrieve this was to be first with the result of the match at the Crystal Palace:

By his special request young Roland Garston had been appointed to report the match:

"You must be prepared for anything, Garston," said the Editor: "Those skunks on the *Courier* went to great expense and trouble over the semi-final, you can be sure they'll stick at nothing to beat us in this bigger affair. I wish you luck; your own reputation and that of the paper rest in a great measure on how you succeed."

"I'll do my best, sir," said the young journalist: "Will you give me a free hand in the matter? I've got an idea which I think, if properly worked, will come out top whatever precautions they may take."

"Certainly," said the Editor; and the interview terminated:

On the evening of his interview with the Editor of the *Dispatch*, Garston went to the volunteer drill hall; he was an enthusiastic member of the signaling corps, and he put in a good night's work; then, with a dozen of his comrades, he went round to his club. It was nearly one when the party broke up and the members went home quietly. The next day he was in telephonic communication with the London office of the *Dispatch*, he also had a long interview with his junior, young Crombie, and spent the afternoon in reporting a small local match in the neighbourhood:

The following day was Thursday; and Garston left Tellwell by the midday train: By a peculiar coincidence three of his fellow volunteers traveled by the same train, though in different carriages; at Nottingham three more joined, and the party at Garston's London hotel that night consisted of the same men as at the dinner at the Tellwell club a night or so before:

In the Editor's room at the *Courier* offices that night Mr. Phineas P. Maskell was bidding his chief farewell, upon his departure to London:

"There's nothing that can beat us, boss," he remarked complacently: "Owing to a little circumstance only known to ourselves, no one will be able to send any messages

from the ground, and as your humble has arranged to keep the nearest post-office busy from the start to the finish, nobody but ourselves will get a look in. Don't forget that only stuff marked 'O.K.' counts; the other will be simply bunkum to keep the wires goin'. You freeze on, don't you?"

"Yes," said his chief; "you're a clever chap, Maskell, and we ought to do it. Stop at nothing to prevent young Garston getting ahead of you."

"Oh, I don't fear him," said the other, "although I should feel a little more comfortable if he wasn't doin' the job. He's darned smart, but wasted."

Shortly afterwards Mr. Maskell was seated in a first-class smoker bound for London.

At midday on Friday the Editor of the *Dispatch* received the following telegram:

Laid up. Please send Crombie to the Palace.
—GARSTON.

At which the Editor smiled broadly and handed it to the junior reporter, whose smile was broader still.

At two o'clock the Editor of the *Courier* smiled cheerfully as he indited the following message:

Just heard G. is laid up. T. sending junior.—
FESLEY.

And in the smoking-room of his hotel, Mr. Phineas P. Maskell withdrew a cheroot from his mouth in order to give vent to a cackle of glee.

But in a bed-sitting room of a small villa in Sydenham sat Mr. Roland Garston, smoking a pipe and smiling more cheerfully than them all.

* * * *

It wanted nearly an hour to the time at which Tellwell Rovers and the Southern Rangers were due to meet each other in the contest for the English Cup, but already the ground at the Crystal Palace was covered with a vast multitude of football enthusiasts from all parts of the country.

Tellwell was well represented by all conditions and classes of its inhabitants: Northern drawl and Cockney twang mixed together in a babel of arguments and theories as to which side would win.

In the Press stand Maskell nodded affably to the junior reporter of the *Tellwell Dispatch*, and the junior reporter nodded back and bent over his note-book and smiled.

The American reporter's scheme for conveying the news to his paper had created a small sensation in the neighbourhood.

Two dozen messengers had been engaged, eighteen of these were stationed at short intervals between the Palace ground and a local post-office, almost half-a-mile away, while the other six filled the small office, sending message after message, keeping the line open to Tellwell, and effectually blocking it for anyone else.

Hundred after hundred of words flashed through to the *Courier* office, only to be consigned to the waste-paper basket; these were the Yankee's "bunkum" messages, and the Editor was looking for an "O.K." on the flimsy paper before it was sent to the composing-room.

Just before the game started, Crombie, following his senior's instructions, walked over to the telegraph office on the ground with a message for his paper. There he found three or four agitated officials and a small crowd of infuriated Press men.

"You can't send that," shouted one of them, as he came up; "the wire's cut."

"Yes, sir," said one of the officials. "It was working all right ten minutes ago, but now all communication seems to have been cut off. I wish I had the beggar who did it within reach."

"Can't you get it put right by the time the match ends?" asked one of the reporters feverishly.

"Impossible, sir; we have no idea as to where the line has been tampered with, and, even if we had, we could never get it right in time."

Crombie left them anxiously discussing the situation.

"Just as Garston suspected," he muttered, and thought of Maskell and the small post-office.

When he got back to the Press stand the match was just about to begin; he began to write quickly, and Maskell, noticing him, rubbed his thin hands together gleefully.

A moment or so later the great match had commenced, and everyone's eyes were fixed on the players. If they had not been so engaged they would probably have had their attention drawn to one of the large oak trees at the end of the field.

A man was sitting across a bough some distance up, a pair of field-glasses were fastened round his head by springs, and a white flag with a broad blue bar was waving up and down.

Roland Garston was sending the news to his paper despite the cutting of the telegraph wires.

Ten minutes after the start Tellwell Rovers scored a goal, and the enthusiasm of the Northerners on the ground knew no bounds.

The flag in the tree was flashing frantically. Garston was signaling the news in the Morse code.

Dash—dot—dash—dash—dot—dot.

Away on one of the towers of the Palace a man was reading the message with the aid of powerful glasses; then he turned, and another flag passed the intelligence to a signaler at Forest Hill.

Dash—dot—dash—dot—dot.

The Forest Hill man repeated it to a comrade at the next point.

The Tellwell signaling corps were excelling themselves.

From the Crystal Palace to the Tower Bridge went the news in a few minutes, then to a man on St. Paul's Cathedral, and another signalling man, leaning out of the window of the *Tellwell Dispatch's* office on Ludgate Hill, read it and shouted it to the paper's London correspondent, who stood at the private telephone connecting the London and Tellwell offices.

Eight minutes after the goal had been scored, the news was posted up in the *Dispatch's* window to delight a small multitude gathered outside.

The Editor of the *Courier* received Mr. Maskell's information exactly sixty seconds after reading it in a copy of the *Dispatch* with which a kind friend had hurried in.

Something was upsetting the Yankee's plans he felt certain, but what?

Meanwhile the match was being fought stubbornly, the Southern team had equalised, and, despite the strenuous endeavours of both sides, at half-time the score stood one all.

By this time the Press men were frantic, both London and provincial reporters were helpless. Someone investigated Mr. Phineas P. Maskell's little dodge, and for a time it looked as though there would be a free fight in the little post-office. The police were hastily summoned and disorder averted. Special messengers were sent to every post-office in the neighbourhood with the flimsy sheets of copy.

Meanwhile the author of all the trouble was resting on his laurels in the almost deserted Press box, smoking his everlasting cheroot. Presently young Crombie strolled in.

"Got yer news through O.K., young feller?" asked the American, with a sneering smile.

"Yes, thanks," said the junior breezily.

"Oh, hev you?" Mr. Maskell started: "They told me that somethin' had gone wrong with the wires."

"Oh, we've had wires cut before, you know," replied Crombie with a grin, as he strolled away.

Maskell flung away the cheroot and fidgeted uneasily in his seat.

"It may have been bluff, but it didn't look like it," he muttered. "I'll bet my last cent that young Garston's at the bottom of it. Still, whatever they're doin', they won't beat my little dodge."

Soon after the interval at half-time Tellwell scored again, and some few minutes later the news gladdened the hearts of the football enthusiasts in the team's home.

One of the telegraph officials who had no duties to perform was on the fringe of the crowd watching the match; he was not enthusiastic, and presently he noticed the flag waving from the tree; for a time he regarded it from mere curiosity, but soon his eyes were watching it keenly.

Dot—dash—dot—dot—dash.

The man spelt off the message, it was a brief description of how the last goal had been scored.

"That's smart!" he said to the man next to him.

"What?" growled the supporter of the Southern team.

"Why, that chap in the tree up there; he's sending a description of the match by the Morse code."

"What, wiv a flag?" said the Cockney: "Thought it was a telegram arrangement?"

"You can work it with flags or anything; I understand it," replied the operator, with the air of one possessing greatly superior knowledge.

The attention of other people was drawn to the tree, and eyes traveled alternately from the field of play to the man in the tree who was reporting what happened there.

Mr. Maskell's attention was drawn to it, and he viewed the proceedings with apprehension:

Never had a more exciting or more strenuously fought match been played upon the Crystal Palace ground.

Backwards and forwards went the sphere of leather, and backwards and forwards surged the teams. Now a fierce attack on one goal, then the attackers were driven

back, suddenly to become defenders themselves.

The supporters of the Southern team yelled themselves hoarse; not a slip missed their critical eyes, and the unfortunate offender brought down volleys of rebuke upon his head.

Rankin, one of the Southern half-backs, did wonders in head work, and the men of the South could almost have fallen down and worshipped him.

But things were getting desperate with the Southerners—barely fifteen minutes to play and still a goal behind.

Once they got a penalty, and the black mass round the field swayed and murmured eagerly.

Then a howl of disappointment, mixed with yells of delight, rose from the Northerners.

The Rovers' goal-keeper had punched the ball cleverly well over the heads of the attackers and one of the forwards was off with it like a hare.

But the redoubtable Rankin was on him, and once again the ball went back to the centre of the field.

Five minutes before time, amid an uproarious scene, the Southern team secured another goal. "A draw" yelled the disappointed crowd.

As the ball was centred, Mr. Maskell looked at his watch, it wanted but three minutes to time, and both teams appeared to be playing half-heartedly; then he looked at the busy flag in the tree and did a very foolish thing.

"A draw—two goals each," he wrote on a piece of paper, marked it "O.K.," and the next second it was passing along the line of messengers. Three seconds after it had left the Yankee's hands, every eye was fixed intently on the field, and not a sound went up from the huge concourse of people.

The Tellwell captain had got the ball to himself and was rushing towards the enemy's goal. Behind him came in a compact mass the rest of both teams, in front of him were the two backs and the Southerners' goal-keeper, and on a level with him was the referee, watch in hand, and whistle in mouth. He passed the backs neatly, and had only the goal-keeper to defeat.

It was a crisis great enough to upset the coolest and most self-possessed of men, and at the critical moment the Southern goal-keeper lost his head, he ran forward a foot or so to meet the Tellwell man, that wily player slipped on one side, passed him,

and shot the ball between the posts. Ere the players could pull up from their frantic run, the referee's whistle rang out sharp and clear; Tellwell Rovers had won the English Cup!

While the crowd were shouting themselves hoarse, Mr. Maskell was tearing like a madman to the post-office, white to the lips with rage and fear; and the flag in the tree had started the result upon a journey of one hundred miles.

Three minutes after the result of the match the *Courier* came wet from the machines announcing a draw, five minutes later the *Dispatch* was being bought at fabulous prices; it announced that the Rovers had won by three goals to two.

The Tellwell people stared at each other blankly. What did it mean?

In about a quarter of an hour they knew; the *Courier* came out with the same announcement as the *Dispatch*, regretting an error in the previous edition.

That night the football edition of the *Dispatch* containing full details of the play had a record sale, and the *Courier* people gnashed their teeth.

Sensational developments followed; the muzzling of the whole Press in the reporting of the most important match of the football season was a serious matter, not to be overlooked. Garston was interviewed by a committee of London and Provincial editors, and his evidence, taken in conjunction with Maskell's elaborate preparations and the affair of the semi-final at Tellwell, caused them to take decisive action.

Three days later a man was arrested for cutting the wires between the Crystal Palace and London. He had been in the employ of the Post-office telegraphic department, and his knowledge of the wires had made him most useful to Maskell, who had often employed him.

The whole story came out at his trial, and the *Dispatch* secured the finest advertisement it had ever had in its existence, while Garston's journalistic reputation was made for all time.

The *Courier* never survived the exposure of the methods they had employed, and the *Dispatch*, with Garston still on the staff, has more than made up for its lost prestige.

Maskell went back to the States, where his talents will probably be more appreciated, for although the British Public love enterprise, they fail to tolerate underhand and unsportsmanlike conduct as a means to any end.

STORIES IN VERSE.

The recitations which have served for several generations are now ready to give place to others of a more modern type. What could be better suited to both adults and school children for repetition than the rhyming stories of which this feature consists? The Editor will gladly give permission for their use. Application should be made to him at 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The Village Earthquake. *

* * * * * By JESSIE POPE.

A village, Mugby-Major named,
Stood on a steep hillside,
The Mugby-Majorites were famed
For their excessive pride;
No village in the world, they vowed,
Could possibly be finer,
And day by day they poured contempt
On little Mugby-Minor.

The cronies of the former place,
On March the thirty-first,
Sat in the Mugby-Major Arms
To chat, and quench their thirst.
On earthquakes did the topic turn,
Much talk the theme afforded,
For earthquakes not so far from home
Had lately been recorded.

Jack Brett, a Mugby-Minor lad,
Among his betters sat;
He loved the landlord's daughter Nell—
There's not a doubt of that.
With all the ardour of his heart
He hungered to enshrine her,
But Nell looked coldly at a lad
Who hailed from Mugby-Minor.

His disregarded village home
Lay several miles away,
And when at last he rose to go
He was not pressed to stay.
But ere he went he promised Nell
Some cowslips in the morning,
Yet while he lingered in farewell,
The maid was frankly yawning.

Next morn he left his truckle bed
As it was growing light,
For he'd resolved to win her hand
And heart before the night.

Jack was a lad of many parts,
More mettlesome than humble,
But while he plucked the flowers he heard
A loud, uncanny rumble.

He started up a trifle pale
And quickly looked around,
Till something queer that met his eye
Accounted for the sound.
He dropped the cowslips on the grass,
And, swift as for a wager,
He flew like arrow from the bow
Full tilt for Mugby-Major.

Then Mugby-Major had a shock
Ere it was wide awake,
"The earthquake!" came a sudden shout
That made each bosom quake.
"The earthquake!" and the rocks on high
"The earthquake!" did repeat;
"The earthquake!"—voices caught the cry
All down the village street.

Then stolid hearts began to thump
And sunburnt cheeks to pale;
The women, clutching at the men,
Began to scream and wail.
The men rushed blindly for the doors,
While near and yet more near
The palpitating rumble fell
Upon each awestruck ear.

"What is it?" "Where?" "Which
way?" and "When?"
"Jack Brett!" "The earthquake!"
"Hark!"

Came question, answer, pell-a-mell
All muddled in the dark.
Then rose the landlord's sturdy voice
And bade them all be still.
"My friends," he said, "our only chance
Is Mugby-Major hill."

The baker left his quartern loaves,
The loafer left his bed,
The grocer left his scales and weights
And climbed the hill instead.
The cow upset the milking-pail
Among the springing clover,
The milkmaid shrieked—and spread the news
The earthquake knocked it over.

Wives left the milk upon the fire,
The porridge in the pot ;
They left the bacon in the dish
Just cooked and smoking hot.
With panic-stricken cries each snatched
Her children to her breast,
And, leaving hearth and home behind,
Rushed out and joined the rest.

The landlord's daughter rose apace,
Apace she donned her gown,
Then, with a terror-stricken face,
In haste she hurried down ;
Forgetful of his lowly race,
Forgetful of her charms,
She paused not till she found a place
Within her lover's arms.

"I've always loved you, Jack," she sighed ;
"I've been a foolish maid,
But now you hold my hand in yours,
I'm really not afraid."
The heavy masses of her hair
Fell loosely from their tether,
"And if we die, dear Jack," she said,
"At least we'll die together."

Meanwhile the rumbling nearer came
With queer, pulsating shock.
One said he felt the meadow quake,
One saw the steeple rock,
That Mugby-Minor was engulfed
A dozen more asserted,
And faster than I can relate
They left their homes deserted.

With puff and pant they scaled the hill
Till they were like to drop—
The young, the old, the lean, the fat,
Pressed on and would not stop.
The echoing rumble died away,
They rested in the hollow,
Safe for the moment, yet, alas !
Uncertain what might follow.

They stayed up there two dreary hours ;
At last, when all seemed still,
The men, by turns, plucked heart of grace
To venture down the hill.

Their wives refused to stay alone,
They vowed it with insistence,
So crept behind their better halves
At a respectful distance.

(It may be guessed that Jack and Nell
Were never far apart—
Again the maid confessed the love
She'd hidden in her heart.
Though Jack were Mugby-Minor bred
She vowed she'd never rue it,
Not death itself could crush her love,
Or quaking earth undo it.)

But when they reached the Mugby road
They broke in bitter cries,
A mass of tangled planks and beams
And wreckage met their eyes.
"But, courage, friends!" the landlord cried,
"D'ye see those ragged louts?—
They're only gipsies putting up
Some shows and roundabouts."

The gipsies thought these Mugby folks,
Must be three-quarters crazed,
And when the rustics questioned them,
They were the more amazed.
"What of the earthquake?" came their cry ;
"Pray tell us how you fared?
It wrecked our village hours ago,
But all of us are spared!"

"There's been no earthquake," said one man,
"Not here, at any rate.
Our traction engine makes more noise
Than fifty earthquakes, mate!
This hill of yours has worried her,
But still, she's powerful strong ;
She's just gone down the hill again
To bring the boats along!"

"The boats! Good sakes! Is there a
flood?"
The nervous women cried:
"The swinging boats I should have said,"
The gipsy man replied.
"Come on, come on!" the landlord cried,
Perplexed and rather flurried.
And half despairing, half in hope,
Along the road they hurried.

They passed the shoulder of the hill
That screened and flanked their tillage,
A moment more they looked upon
Their own beloved village.
Deserted, certainly, but safe—
No crack or fissure cleft it—
In sunshine Mugby-Major stood
Exactly as they'd left it.

"Where is the earthquake?" said a voice,
The rest looked rather small.
"It's my belief," the baker said,
"There's not been one at all!"
"We've been deceived," the landlord roared,
And raised a threatening arm,
"Where is that Mugby-Minor lad
Who gave the first alarm?"

"The only earthquake that occurred,"
Laughed Jack, "was in each breast,
The engine with the roundabouts
Completely did the rest.
But, friends, I've only paid you back
For all your jeers at me.
You're April fools, each one of you.
A happy month!" said he.

"Begone!" the landlord cried in ire,
"Nor dare to come again!"
But Nelly pleaded with her sire,
Nor did she plead in vain.
"If I wed Jack he'll never tell.
If not," said this designer,
"We shall be mocked by all the shire,
The butt of Mugby-Minor."

"Yes, that's a bargain, sir," cried Jack;
And all the neighbours said:
"Aye, landlord, we must hush it up;
You'd better let them wed."
"Well, take her, Jack," he cried, "she's yours;
You've moved the earth to win her—
And now we'd better go indoors
And have a bit of dinner."

Foreman Bill.

By GORDON MEGGY.

A Cowboy's Story.

Out in Montana I once knew a man
Whose temper was fearful to see;
He was cured in one night
By the loss of his sight—
I'll spin you the yarn, boss, as near as I can,
It's as clear in my mind as can be.

I reckon you know, boss, the ranchers out thar
Have two "round ups"—the "Spring"
an' the "Fall."
Mostly calves in the spring;
But the whole blessed string
Are collected in fall time, from near an' from
far,
An' are branded—cows, beef-stock, an' all.

Some twelve years ago—'94 was the date—
I was working for outfit "A. K."
That year, boss, the rains
Half flooded the plains,
An' we boys, who were roundin' up early an'
late,
Were wet through by the end of the day.

One night we were struck by a terrible storm,
An' what with the thunder an' rain
(My word, it did pour!),
One continuous roar
Made us deaf. At two yards we could not see
a form,
An' the cattle were almost insane.

Each minute or so there came flashes of light
When it seemed to be brighter than day,
And every steer
Just bellowed with fear,
Their eyes popping out of their heads from
sheer fright,
And all ready to gallop away.

There was three of us boys lookin' after the
herd,
Frantz, myself, an' the foreman—that's Bill,
Who kept swearin' at us
Like a bad-tempered cuss,
And using worse language than ever I heard,
And I've been pretty well thro' the mill.

I rode up to Bill an' called out in his ear—
My words were less spoken than sung—
That the steers would be off,
But he just gave a scoff
An' quick as a dart, with a horrible swear,
I was told to durned well hold my tongue.

"Did I guess he'd bin ranchin' for near
thirty years?"
"What the blazes could I let him know?"
"He'd seen stampedes before
"An' was bloomin' well sure—
"I might keep to myself my old-womanish
fears—
"That those blessed old cows wouldn't go!"

In the midst of his swearin' a terrible crash
 Rent the air like the crack of a gun,
 An' we boys, with a yell,
 Started ridin', pell-mell,
 For we saw all at once, in the following flash,
 That the steers were commencing to run.

* * * * *
 To ride in the dark over country unknown
 With a thunder of hoofs that spells death;
 Only waiting to fall,
 Horse, rider, and all,
 An' be trampled to pieces, with no time to groan,
 Would make many a man hold his breath.

As we rode we kept edgin' 'em off more an' more,
 To get 'em away to the right—
 We remembered with dread
 That, two miles ahead,
 The river came down with a rush and a roar
 That would swallow us all in the night.

I shouted and hollered an' fired off my gun,
 But I'm durned if the cattle would "mill."*
 Then the light gave a blaze
 That half stunned me for days,
 When I saw a large "washout"† ahead of
 our run,
 An' my heart for a moment stood still.

* * * * *
 I was shot like an arrow, away from my horse,
 Far up on the opposite side;
 While the steers, with a thud,
 Went bang in the mud,
 One on top of the other they fell with such force
 That some scarce had a square inch of hide.

* The cowboys' method of stopping a stampede is to head the cattle off, turning them to the right or left until finally they are galloping in a circle, which grows smaller as the boys ride round it, driving the animals towards the centre. This is called a "mill."

† A torrent bed, long since dried up, sometimes twenty-five feet in depth. The bottom, especially in wet weather, is often knee deep in mud and slush.

But Bill, the poor fellow, at furious pace
 Was carried right into the flood,
 His pony had bolted:
 All shaken an' jolted,
 He was dragged by his stirrup along on his face
 Till his features were covered with blood.

Straight as a dart went the terrified steed
 An' leapt with a spring from the bank.
 In he plunged with a drench,
 Giving Bill such a wrench
 That the leather was broken off short; he was freed,
 An' down, like a bullet, he sank.

Unable to swim, cut to bits, an' half dead,
 Bill clutched at his horse when he rose,
 And, one hand on the saddle,
 He managed to paddle
 Till he scrambled ashore on some shallows
 ahead—
 How he managed it nobody knows.

We found him next morning—a horrible sight,
 His cheeks had been torn to a shred,
 His jaw bone was cracked,
 And I guess it's a fact—
 For months the poor chap wasn't able to bite—
 He had hardly a tooth in his head.

* * * * *
 There isn't a man in the States, boss, to-day,
 With a pleasanter temper than Bill.
 He's married a squaw
 An' sits thar at his door,
 An' can tell by the air if it's April or May,
 As he pulls at his pipe with a will.

There isn't a cat that can pass him unheard;
 As for cowboys! When some of us come
 He can tell, by the tread,
 If it's Tom, Dick, or Fred,
 An' he smiles as we talk, but says never a word—
 For that night, boss, the storm struck him
 dumb!

THE FLIGHT OF FASHION.

BY FREDA RODHAM.

When milady came to town 'twas for the season;
 And milady came in state.
 With her coach and four by slow and easy
 stages—
 Now such things are out of date.

Then the railways came, and with much
 trepidation,
 Saw milady take the train,
 And someone overheard milady murmuring
 She would never post again.

But to-day we find milady's fancies vary;
 She prefers the road by far,
 Not the slow and easy stages of a post-chaise,
 But a high-speed motor-car.

As the motor-car has almost reached per-
 fection,
 There is no doubt by-and-by,
 Quite tired out with coaches, trains, and cars,
 and such-like,
 We shall see milady fly!

True Detective Stories. ❁ ❁

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ By M. F. GORON.

(Late Chief of the Paris Detective Police.)

Edited by ALBERT KEYZER. ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

These thrilling stories relate true incidents in the career of M. Goron—in fact, they are actual extracts from the pages of the diary which he kept while engaged in the duties of the profession he loves so well. Some of the stories in the series will, perhaps, throw lights on the detective world which are hardly in keeping with British views of justice; but it must be remembered that the Chief of the Paris Detective Police wields immense power and is allowed a certain discretion—except when a crime has been committed—to save innocent persons the disgrace of a public scandal. M. Goron has taken a very keen interest in preparing these stories for press.

IV.—An Ugly Case.

A T six in the morning Vaillant, the man who threw the bomb in the Chamber of Deputies, had been executed, and I had been compelled to attend this hideous function. I had not been to bed. I reached my office an hour later, very tired, and determined, if possible, to retire early. Up to four o'clock nothing had occurred to prevent my having a night's rest, when I received the following note:

DEAR FRIEND,

I expect you to dinner to-night. Meet me at Pousset's at half-past seven. Serious business.

ARMAND.

Even without the last two words, I would have guessed that something had gone wrong. My friend's usually bold writing appeared thin and shaky; and he, the exuberant man, who would write three pages to say what others express in three lines, had adopted a laconic style. Yes, that note foreboded trouble—if not worse—and I scribbled a line to say that I would meet him at the appointed hour.

Armand P. and I were old chums. Both born in Rennes, we were educated at the same college, and, although in later years our ways lay in different directions, our friendship never changed.

Armand was the son of a retired stockbroker, and had inherited about twenty thousand pounds from his mother, who died

a year after he was born. He had a cousin, Marceline, whom he loved; and on the day he came of age he informed his father and me that he intended to marry her. I shall never forget that date, because it was the only time he and I quarreled.

His father, I knew, was strongly opposed to marriages between members of the same family. When he remonstrated with Armand, and the latter appealed to me, I sided with the father, and, after a stormy scene, induced my friend to give up his idea.

Marceline was not the wife for the good-natured Armand, and I was glad when that danger was past. Two years later he married a lady he had met at Royat, and bought a pretty villa near Ville d'Avray, where I sometimes paid them a visit on a Sunday afternoon.

Unfortunately, this union did not turn out well. Madame P. was rather bigoted, and of a highly nervous temperament, her husband's boisterousness and his loud laughter seemed to upset her. These two people had no thought in common, and after a while my visits to Ville d'Avray stopped altogether.

As to Marceline, she had married a cavalry captain, who soon afterwards was killed by a fall from his horse, and left her a limited income and a house in Versailles. From Ville d'Avray to Versailles is only twenty

minutes' drive, and I knew that Armand, since the captain's death, spent much of his time with Marceline.

When I reached Pousset's and saw Armand I looked at him in surprise. Hollow-cheeked, pale, with sunken, lack-lustre eyes, I hardly recognised my poor friend, who, some six weeks before, was the picture of health. He rose when he saw me, walked with me to the door, and, hailing a cab, told the man to drive to Voisin's.

"Is it a dinner-party?" I asked.

"No," he said. It was the first word he had spoken.

At Voisin's he led the way to a private room on the first floor. I saw he had ordered the dinner and that the menu had been compiled with his usual skill.

"I wanted to be alone with you," he said, "and here we can talk undisturbed."

I was hungry and quite prepared to do honour to Voisin's cuisine, but before I had swallowed my first spoonful of soup, I noticed that the waiter had placed before Armand a boiled egg and a glass of milk.

"Are you going to make your dinner off that?"

"Yes," he replied with a painful smile, "but don't trouble about me. We will talk when you have finished."

The fish was served, and the man was about to leave the room, when I called him back.

"That will do," I ordered, "you need not bring the remainder of the dinner."

Then, turning to Armand, I exclaimed:

"And now, for Heaven's sake, speak."

He slowly walked up to me, placed both his hands on my shoulders, and, in a strained voice brought, or rather jerked, out the words:

"Did you see Vaillant before he was led to execution?"

"I did. Why?"

"Because you will then have beheld two condemned men in one day—Vaillant this morning, me to-night!"

"Armand," I cried, "are you mad?"

"No, I am not mad. I am——"

I saw he was nearly fainting, and led him to the sofa.

"I feel better, old chap," he said after a while, "and, now, I have to impart to you a fearful secret, which the chief of the detective police must ignore. It is not from him, but from the faithful friend, and, above all, from the clever detective, that I claim assistance. Goron, I am being slowly poisoned."

I was speechless with amazement; and he continued:

"I want you to find out the culprit, and I know you will do it. But you will give me your word of honour that no harm shall befall the murderer."

"My dear Armand——" I began.

"Wait till I have finished—until I have told you the names of two persons, one of whom is poisoning me. Yes, there are only two."

He gave a sob, and, after an uncanny silence, suddenly screamed out:

"Goron, either my wife, or Marceline, my cousin, is the murderess. You may well shudder. And now you will understand why the chief of police may not know of the affair, and why neither of these women may be harmed. They are sacred to me. For one bears my name; and the other, the other—I have loved all my life!"

With a violent gesture of his clenched fist, he continued:

"You must find out who did the deed. It is your dying friend's last wish."

"Armand," I said, when I had recovered from my surprise, "I do not know on what you found your suspicions; but, admitting all you say, how can I, in my official capacity, allow a murderess—no matter in what relation she stands to you—to escape the punishment she deserves? I would betray the trust placed in me."

He sprang from the sofa.

"If you harm either of these women, Goron," he shrieked, "you do worse, you betray my trust in you!"

I battled long, but as my friend's life was at stake, I reluctantly yielded, and promised to help him to solve the mystery without injuring the women.

"Thank you," he whispered, "I will now die happy."

"No," I interrupted him, "you will not die. Heaven knows what is lurking behind all this, and what startling discovery I may make. But, you will have to place yourself unreservedly in my hands, and obey my instructions without questioning my motives."

"I will."

"Then tell me more about your suspicions."

"You call them suspicions? Look here, Goron, two months ago I was a strong man. And now! About six weeks ago, my health suddenly began to fail. I experienced burning pains in the digestive organs, and a disagreeable taste in my mouth after meals. I consulted my medical

man, who told me it was a form of indigestion, and prescribed a treatment which I followed. But my condition grew slowly worse, and for the last fortnight I have been sustaining myself on three eggs a day and a little milk.

"I consulted Dr L— and Professor G—, renowned specialists. They took a big fee, and informed me that my medical man's diagnosis was right. Until that moment the idea of poisoning had never entered my mind, until, by a singular coincidence, I happened to read the report of a poisoning case in Milan, where a man had been systematically administering arsenic to his victims. I was struck by the similarity of the symptoms described with what I myself experienced, except that one of the victims had dark spots on his body.

"Goron, the next night, when I undressed, I discovered dark spots on my thighs! It flashed upon me that I, too, was being poisoned, and, under an assumed name, I went to the principal hospital, where I told the consulting physician that I feared I had inadvertently swallowed a dose of arsenic. He did not seem to believe my story, but, as I accused no one, he made the necessary examination, and after a few days informed me that I had really taken poison, and prescribed the proper remedy."

"And then?" I asked.

"And then—I knew that only Jeanne or Marceline could have been guilty of this horrible crime. Jeanne and I, as you know, are not happy; and I am only too glad to spend a few hours with Marceline. Sometimes I lunch with her, at others I invite myself to dinner—she is always glad to see me. And, during the last week, I have taken all my meals at home or at my cousin's."

"And these pains, and the nasty taste, did you notice them after you lunched or dined at your house, or at Marceline's?"

"I knew you would ask me that. And it is there that the mystery comes in; for those very same symptoms show themselves when I return from my cousin's and when I stay at home."

"So that you are inclined to suspect the two women?"

"I don't know. It is too terrible."

"Is Jeanne on good terms with Marceline?"

"No."

"Does your wife expect you back to-night?"

"Yes."

"Then send her a telegram that you are

detained in town. To-night you stay with me, and, to-morrow, I will take you somewhere where you are safe. But, I have a few more questions to ask. What do your wife and Marceline say about your altered appearance?"

"They seem very concerned about me; and are anxious to do all they can."

"Frankly—who do you suspect?"

"Sometimes I think it is Marceline; sometimes I think it is my wife. It is horrible."

"Yes, it is horrible. Has there ever been any real trouble between you and either of them?"

"Never."

"Is your life insured?"

"Yes."

"In anyone's name?"

"Yes, in Marceline's."

"Why in hers?"

He coloured slightly, and then said:

"You see, old chap, Marceline is not rich, and, strictly between ourselves, she is a bit of a gambler. She bets on horses, and, occasionally, dabbles in stocks. She has already cost me a rather big amount. So, one day, I insured my life for 150,000 francs, in her name, in case anything happened to me."

I could not help starting slightly.

"When was that?"

"About a year ago."

"Have you told Marceline of this?"

"Yes."

"And your wife?"

"She knows I insured my life, but believes it was done in her name."

"Pardon me, my dear fellow, for asking you a delicate but necessary question. Can you assign any reason—even a monetary one—why either your wife or Marceline should want you to disappear?"

He shook his head mournfully.

"No, I cannot. Jeanne has all she wants, and more. And, as to Marceline, she only has to ask. I never yet refused her anything."

It was nearly eleven o'clock. I took Armand home with me, and the next morning conducted him to a sanatorium near Chinon, where I had taken a little villa for my family, telling the director of the establishment that my friend was suffering from nervous prostration, and wanted absolute rest. I then sent him a valet—one of my own men—who every morning had to fetch him a bottle of fresh milk. I also gave him instructions respecting the bread, and even the eggs, for Armand's frugal meal, which

had to be boiled in my friend's sitting-room.

Having taken these precautions, I made Armand write to his wife and to Marceline that by doctor's orders he was taking a rest cure.

And then I reviewed the situation. It seemed an extraordinary and inexplicable business. Was there only one mystery, or would I have to find my way through two or perhaps more dark plots? What had prompted one of these women to attempt the life of this man? Was it greed? Was it vengeance? To these questions I had to find an answer if I wanted to get at the truth.

I began by making a searching investigation, which brought to light such a startling fact that I went down to my friend, whom I found in bed, looking less dejected. The burning pains were less intense, and the dark spots were slowly disappearing.

"Armand," I said, "before touching upon the business that brings me here, I must refer to the statement you made the other night that you experienced these ugly symptoms no matter where you took your meals. For a minute I had the idea that possibly both women might be implicated in the crime; but, in the absence of direct proof, I abandoned this hypothesis, especially as I have it on the highest medical authority that the effects of systematic arsenical poisoning do not show themselves till several hours later. And, as every day you dined and lunched either at home or at Marceline's, we cannot draw any inference as to where the poison was administered.

"And now," I continued, "let us talk of Marceline. Did you know that her brother Gaston—the young scamp—is back in Paris?"

"Yes, I did."

"Have you ever met him?"

"A few months ago I saw him at his sister's, and the next morning he borrowed five hundred francs from me. Since that day I have never come across him."

"And his sister?"

"She has nothing more to do with him."

"Are you certain of that?"

"Quite certain."

"Then let me tell you, that not only her own money, but the sums you give her, go into that fellow's pocket."

"It is impossible. What proofs have——"

"One moment. What was the last amount you gave Marceline, and on what date?"

"Two thousand francs on the 19th of last month. But why do you ask?"

"Because the day following, Gaston, who, three days before, borrowed five francs from Hippolyte, the waiter in the Café de France, paid two thousand francs to the Vicomte de S——, to whom he had lost that amount in the gambling club in the Rue Taitbout, of which he is one of the chief ornaments. I have a little list in my pocket of the sums this amiable youth lost and spent during the last six months. And you will find the total agrees with what you gave Marceline and what she took out of her own pocket. Marceline herself is heavily in debt and owes money to her tradespeople. It is not she who gambles, but he; and you have been supplying him with the necessary funds."

Armand looked at me in speechless astonishment.

"Good Heavens," he exploded, "I will at once——"

"You will do nothing at all," I said, "until I give you permission. Leave the matter to me. Have you heard at all from you wife or Marceline?"

"Yes, Jeanne telegraphed yesterday that she is ill, but expects to be able to come and see me here in a couple of days. And half-an-hour before you came I received this note from Marceline:

DEAR ARMAND (it said)—I am glad you are taking a rest cure, and hope it will soon put you right. I hear Jeanne has influenza, so I will come for a few days to Chinon, to the Hotel de la Boule d'Or. If you are well enough, come and lunch with me at one o'clock.

MARCELINE."

My friend looked at me expectantly.

"What must I do?" he asked.

"My dear Armand," I said, "I know you are anxious to get to the heart of this terrible business, and so am I. Go to Marceline to-morrow. About one o'clock I will come to the hotel to see you, as I am supposed to have missed you when I called here. Remember that you have not seen me, nor heard from me for a long time. Marceline, of course, will ask me to luncheon. You will have your milk and eggs, which you must not touch. But, two or three minutes after we are at table, when you see me twirl my moustache, rise, and tell your cousin you feel faint and want to lie down. Have you understood?"

"Yes, quite."

The next day, when I called at the Boule d'Or, Marceline insisted on my staying, and she herself placed a jug of milk and two

boiled eggs before Armand. I gave the agreed signal, whereupon Armand at once rose and asked permission to rest a little while. As I expected, Marceline conducted him to the adjoining bedroom, and the instant she had gone, I poured some of the milk from the jug into a small flask I had brought with me.

When Marceline returned she looked grave.

"I did not know Armand was so ill," I remarked. "I was surprised to hear he had gone to a sanatorium."

"Yes," she replied, "he seems really ill."

"This milk," I said, "looks delicious. We do not get it like that in Paris. Try it."

And I poured her out a glass.

But she shook her head.

"No, I do not care for it. I never take milk."

She had remained pensive, with her chin on her hand; then suddenly said:

"M. Goron, I have to ask you a great favour. Can I have a few minutes' private conversation with you any time next week?"

"With great pleasure," I replied.

This interview, to which I attached much importance, never came off.

On my return to town I immediately sent the flask I had brought with me from Chinon, to the Municipal Laboratory to have the contents analysed, and early the next morning received a short report stating that the milk did not contain the slightest trace of arsenic. I had just finished reading it when Armand was announced. He seemed greatly agitated.

"You here," I called out. "Why did you leave Chinon without my permission?"

"I came up by the early train," he retorted, "to show you this. It came last night after you had left."

And he threw me a crumpled piece of paper.

It was a shockingly written, badly spelt letter addressed to Monsieur Armand P——:

The woman you love is attempting your life. Be warned ere it is too late.

There was no signature.

I examined it long and carefully.

"What a calamity!" cried Armand, in a hoarse voice.

"What is a calamity?" I asked.

"Why, this letter! Can't you see that the business has leaked out? Who can have sent this?"

"Armand, for a fairly intelligent man,

you are not sharp. This letter gives us the last link we wanted, and it comes at the right moment. Listen carefully, and I will show you which are the points on which this mystery turns. My suspicions, I own, were at first directed against Marceline. Her love of money, and the knowledge that your death would bring her 150,000 francs, told against her. When, however, I heard of her brother's doings, I changed my opinion. Women, my dear Armand, may be weak and foolish enough to impoverish themselves for their brothers; yet sisterly devotion will not lead them into crime. A woman will commit a murder for motives of her own, and sometimes, though very rarely, she will risk her neck for the man she loves—for her brother, never.

"This disposes of Marceline; and now it is your wife who stands before us as the accused person. Of her guilt I have little doubt, and that letter confirms whatever other suspicions I may have entertained. She penned that note herself, and her attempt to compromise Marceline tells its own tale. She wrote it with her left hand, and in the writing—otherwise excellently disguised—I detect her curious habit of putting the dots, not over the i's, but above the letters that follow. This, no doubt, escaped you. There remains only the serious question of what led her to this."

Armand was deep in thought.

"What will you do with her?" he at last said.

"You have my word she shall not be touched. But I have a duty to perform, and will perform it. By to-morrow night we shall be in possession of all the facts, and this ugly nightmare will have come to an end. Please return at once to Chinon, and wait till you hear from me."

My friend's villa in Ville d'Avray stood within its own grounds behind a cluster of trees that hid it from view. As Madame P—— had written to her husband that she was suffering from influenza, I went to the tobacconist's at the corner, and, having purchased a few cigars, inquired after Mons. P——. The gentleman, I was told, was in Paris; but Madame had not gone with him. Had she been ill? No, Madame had been driving her ponies every day. He had just seen her enter the gates.

I went straight to the house, and, a few minutes later Madame P—— came to me in the library.

"You here, M. Goron?" she exclaimed. "It is six months since we saw you. You are neglecting your friends."

She was still the same thin, spinsterish-looking little woman, with pale cheeks, pale, fair hair, pale hands, and a curiously big voice, not in keeping with her small stature.

"Have you seen Armand?" she asked.

"Yes, I knew he was better, and I came here hoping to find him."

"No, he is still away. I could not go to him because I have only just recovered from an attack of influenza. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, you can render me a small service. I want to send a letter to someone, but not in my own writing. I only want to sign it. Will you allow me to dictate it to you?"

"Certainly."

She sat at her husband's desk, dipped her pen in the ink, and waited.

"The woman you love," I began, "is attempting——"

Madame looked up, her lips parted, her whole face turned an ashy grey.

"Is attempting your life. Be warned——"

I could go no further.

With fear expressed in every line of her face, she rushed at me, seized both my arms in a convulsive grasp, then, throwing herself on the sofa, her face buried in the cushions, broke into peals of uncontrollable laughter. After a while she grew calmer.

"Madame," I said, "will you——"

At the sound of my voice she jumped up and stood in front of me.

"No!" she screamed, in a paroxysm of excitement, "don't speak, don't utter a word. Only listen. Yes, you know I wrote that letter. You guessed the whole truth. I can read it in your face. You have come to avenge Armand. But you shall listen to me. You shall know what I suffered, and why I became a murderess. . . . M. Goron, have you ever heard of a woman killing a man because she loved him? . . . Don't look at me surprised. . . . I am not mad. I am quite sane. Had I been bereft of reason I would have suffered less.

"I love Armand as no woman ever loved a man. He is kind, generous, and I would give my life for him any hour of the day. I loved him from the moment I first saw him, and, when we married, I wanted him to know all he was to me. . . . But a curse seemed to rest on me. My stony features and my harsh voice repelled him; and when I tried to tell him how I worshipped him, and that I was pining for his affection, my tongue seemed paralysed. Finally, I gave up these attempts.

And then I knew he was lost to me; and I had to see him spend half his days in the company of that flighty doll, his cousin. . . . I resolved to kill myself, but I knew that he would marry that woman; and I swore that sooner than that he should die!"

She paused a moment, and in a gentler voice continued:

"M. Goron, I have told you what few women tell men. I do not ask for pity. I desire none. . . . Have you come to arrest me?"

And the look of the frightened animal once more came over her face.

I have heard some awful confessions from criminals of the worst type, but this story from the trim, elegantly-dressed woman made a deep impression on me. I longed to have this painful interview over, and said:

"Madame, I have not come to arrest you, because Armand made me promise that if the crime should be brought home to you, you should not be harmed, so far as the law is concerned. In order to save my friend's life I am making the sacrifice of my duty, but I must insist on your obeying my injunctions."

She bowed her head, and it was decided that before the end of the week she should leave France. She at once proposed to go to the cholera-stricken district in Tonquin, where she could be useful, and I promised to see her safely on board the next outgoing steamer. She also signed a declaration to the effect that she was leaving her husband and her home, which would enable Armand to obtain a divorce without any trouble. As I rose to go she stopped me.

"Allow me to make a last request. Don't tell Armand anything about my confession to you. He need not know what I have suffered. Will you promise it me?"

"I promise it."

"I thank you. Good-bye, M. Goron; I shall not forget your kindness."

In less than a week she left for Tonquin, where she toiled night and day in the hospital. She died six months after her arrival from over-exertion.

Armand, I believe, married Marceline. I say, I believe, because that lady wrote me an indignant letter, wherein she said she would never forgive my having suspected her. And she must have made Armand share her indignation, for I have neither seen him nor heard from him since.

(Next month will appear the fifth story in this series: "Number 94.")

The Inimitable Lem Burke.

By PERCIE W. HART.

Relating the startling story of a financier's sudden rise to fortune.

THE average business man of to-day is a humbug pure and simple. Nothing more or less than a fake. Brains? Pshaw!—no need for brains to buy at seventy cents and sell for a dollar—provided you have the wherewithal to buy. It's easy enough when you have something to get some more; but the difficulty is to get a good deal with nothing.

There was old Lem Burke—he's what I call a business man; worth his millions to-day (if he's still alive), and came into New York with less than ten dollars in his pockets a few years ago. Went direct to the biggest and best hotel he could find.

"Want a nice suite of rooms on the first floor," he said to the clerk: "Will be here a week or two. Don't let the reporters git up to my room, whatever you do. Say that I stated in your hearing that there was no truth in the rumour that I had disposed of my timberlands to an English syndicate. Yes, I'll go up now, and have dinner sent to my rooms. Say, you might find out some reliable yacht-broker for me. Want to get a larger boat than the one I have now."

That hotel clerk scented a possible commission in the yacht transaction, selected for him the best rooms in the house, and gave the rest of the people the tip; so that everyone looked upon him as a substantial man.

The fact of his not wanting to see newspaper men was so impressed upon the clerk that he immediately telephoned to his special cronies, and within two hours every editor had determined to interview Mr. Burke.

Lem sent a messenger to the fashionable tailor's, and ordered all kinds of high-priced clothing so profusely that Bigcharge forgot to ask for any reference. Then Lem spent half his ten dollars in buying postage stamps and envelopes of various sizes and colours—had them addressed and posted by an office in the neighbourhood—and the hotel clerk became so impressed by

his voluminous correspondence that he altered the price of the rooms from twenty to thirty dollars per day.

Meanwhile the reporters began coming in perfect droves, and with the urgent solicitation of the clerk were finally admitted to the presence of the supposed magnate.

"Glad to see you, my boy; but can only spare you a moment. Ah, Mr. Scribbler, of the *Daily Whooper*; very dear old friend of that name—would give a hundred thousand dollars if he were only alive to-day: Ah, well; these things must be. But now, my dear fellow, what can I do for you? Timberlands? Well, I don't really know of anything new in that direction. The offer of the syndicate, which I may state is at a very generous figure, is still open; but I have not decided as yet upon my action. Will see that you get the news, though—would really prefer to give it to you exclusively. I am a fairly good judge of human nature, and I can frankly say that I believe you will be absolutely truthful and unprejudiced in your statements.

"My business at present would be of no possible interest to your readers, as it is entirely of a private nature. Am simply arranging the details of a little stock company—just myself and a few near friends—no stock for sale at all—Patent Coal Ash Grindstone Company. You see we have a process by which we compress coal ashes—in fact, almost any kind of so-called refuse—into grindstones. The materials, of course, cost nothing except cartage, the expense of manufacture is merely nominal, and the profits simply—well, I'm sorry I said so much about it, but, of course, it's nearly all profit.

"Now, please don't mention this little side issue of mine. If you must write something, just make it as brief as possible. Come and take lunch with me—well, some other day—glad to have you—and say, if you happen to hear of a nice steam yacht for sale, why, let me know, and I promise you an enjoyable cruise next summer."

And so those guileless newspaper men rushed to their offices, and the morning papers contained one and two column interviews with the Hon. Lemuel Burke, the well-known millionaire timber-merchant, "who will next season dispense a princely hospitality from his superbly-equipped steam yacht, and whose leisure moments are spent in the pleasing occupation of clipping off dividend coupons."

Next day the *Daily Whooper* had an editorial on the Patent Coal Ash Grindstone Co. and its economic possibilities. "The purposes of this company," said the writer, "are particularly commendable. In this age of preposterous schemes and visionary ideas, we hail it as an omen of advance that a raw material that has hitherto been regarded in the light of an expensive incumbrance should be utilised in such a practical manner. It marks an epoch in the possibilities of utilitarian science, and reflects honour upon the brain that conceived it, as well as upon the financial master-mind whose money-making acumen has led him to exploit it. We would suggest that the Street-cleaning Commissioners confer with the officers of this company, and offer them the free delivery of all our refuse, thus saving the city the enormous charges of maintaining a fleet of boats and dumping grounds."

The following morning the *Daily Swiper* came out with a perfect roar of indignation: "We do not care to insinuate," the editor wrote, "that our esteemed contemporary is financially interested in this concern, neither do we care to call attention to the fact that the *Swiper* was the first paper to announce that the Hon. Lemuel Burke was in town. But we cannot neglect the public duty incumbent upon every loyal citizen of this city, to keep a close watch upon unscrupulous persons or individuals—whether they pretend to publish a newspaper or simply shovel sand. Instead of allowing this company to coin money under our very noses, why not buy out their local patent rights, and let the city manufacture and sell its own grindstones? The revenue from this would make the Street-cleaning Department self-sustaining, and might even render all local taxation unnecessary."

Then the yacht-brokers began to pour in upon old Lem.

"Very, very sorry, but have just concluded a purchase. Now I look at your plans I rather regret my hastiness—forty thousand dollars?—why, I paid sixty, and

my boat is not quite as big—yes, sixty thousand, but don't mention it to anyone. I'm not going to tell her name or whom I bought her from until she's been put in first-class order."

The newspapers then announced that the Hon. Lemuel J. Burke had purchased a one hundred and fifty thousand dollar steam yacht, and the *Swiper* came out with her picture by "Our Staff Artist."

Old Lem asked the hotel manager for a temporary loan of five hundred dollars, and it was sent up to his room in clean new bills, with the latter's compliments. All the leading clubs sent Mr. Burke a visitor's ticket, he was welcomed into the most exclusive circles, and was importuned by money-burdened millionaires for some stock in the Patent Coal Ash Grindstone monopoly.

"No, my dear friend," he would say gravely, "my company is not yet in active operation. There may be some unlooked-for set-back, and instead of making millions of dollars we may lose our investment: I really don't want you to risk anything—for all novel enterprises are risky, you know. But come now—we really need no outside capital—but I tell you what I'll do—I'll let you have a slice of my stock at par—no, not a cent. above—just for friendship's sake."

Old Lem gave away so many slices at a hundred thousand dollars a slice, that by-and-by the pie was all gone and Lem Burke was worth close on a million dollars.

Soon after this he received a cablegram from England, requesting his immediate help in a matter concerning the welfare of the nation.

His departure was heralded by voluminous reports in the papers concerning the urgent business on which he was summoned, and dwelling on the vast importance of its nature. He left the hotel with a great splash, wafted on his way by the grateful prayers of the recipients of princely tips and the fervent admiration of his happy shareholders.

Then the storm burst. No sooner had he turned his back than it was discovered that no such syndicate as the Patent Coal Ash Grindstone Co. had ever existed, and its securities were just so much waste-paper. A hue and cry was raised, but Lem, who had feathered his nest well, managed to elude his pursuers, and nothing could ever be heard of his whereabouts.

He knew a bit, did old Lem:

Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction.

Those who are unversed in foreign languages often wish that they had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the literature of countries other than their own. From this feature they may obtain an idea as to the kind of story that is most popular among the various nationalities. In turning the stories into English, the translators are careful to preserve the authors' own peculiarities of style.

A PASSION IN THE DESERT. * * *

By *HONORÉ DE BALZAC.* (From the French. Translated by
Count Stenbock.)

Honoré de Balzac was born at Tours on May 20th, 1799. At five he could read well and fluently, and devoured every book that fell into his hands, and at eleven he composed an essay on Will, which his schoolmaster, with the true instincts of a pedant, threw into the fire. At twenty-one he had finally made up his mind to become an author, and after many vicissitudes began to devote himself to the great work of his life—a record of the manners of his time, an analysis of human society—which he grouped into a series of about one hundred stories of varying length, under the title of “*La Comédie Humaine.*” The vast labour entailed by the undertaking sapped the strength of the author; he became rich and prosperous and married a Russian lady, Countess Eva de Hanska, but four months after his marriage became seriously ill, and, hurrying to Paris, died there in 1850, at the summit of his fame.

The prologue of the following story relates that the author and his friend (alluded to as “she”) have been to see a menagerie of wild beasts. This leads to a discussion between them about the taming of animals. In the audience is an old soldier, with whom the author gets into conversation, and who, in return for a good dinner, promises to tell him the story of an adventure of his own with a panther. The sequel, which the author writes out and sends to his friend, shows the result.

DURING the expedition in Upper Egypt under General Desaix, a Provençal soldier fell into the hands of the Mangrabins, and was taken by these Arabs into the deserts beyond the falls of the Nile.

In order to place a sufficient distance between themselves and the French army, the Mangrabins made forced marches, and only rested during the night. They camped round a well, overshadowed by palm trees, under which they had previously concealed a store of provisions. Not surmising that the notion of their flight would occur to their prisoner, they contented themselves with binding his hands, and, after eating a few dates, and giving provender to their horses, went to sleep.

When the brave Provençal saw that his enemies were no longer watching him, he made use of his teeth to steal a scimitar, fixed the blade between his knees, and cut the

cords which prevented him using his hands; in a moment he was free. He at once seized a rifle and a dagger; then, taking the precaution to provide himself with a sack of dried dates, oats, and powder and shot, and to fasten a scimitar to his waist, he leapt on to a horse, and spurred on vigorously in the direction where he thought to find the French army.

So impatient was he to see a bivouac again that he pressed on the already tired courser at such speed, that its flanks were lacerated with his spurs, and at last the poor animal died, leaving the Frenchman alone in the desert.

After walking some time in the sand with all the courage of an escaped convict, the soldier was obliged to stop, as the day had already ended. In spite of the beauty of an Oriental sky at night, he felt he had not strength enough to go on. Fortunately he

had been able to find a small hill, on the summit of which a few palm trees shot up into the air; it was their verdure seen from afar which had brought hope and consolation to his heart:

His fatigue was so great that he lay down upon a rock of granite, capriciously cut out like a camp-bed; there he fell asleep without taking any precaution to defend himself while he slept. . . .

He was awakened by the sun, whose pitiless rays fell with all their force on the granite and produced an intolerable heat—for he had had the stupidity to place himself inversely in the shadow thrown by the verdant, majestic heads of the palm trees: He looked at the solitary trees and shuddered—they reminded him of the graceful shafts crowned with foliage which characterise the Saracen columns in the cathedral of Arles:

But when, after counting the palm trees, he cast his eyes around him, the most horrible despair was infused into his soul.

Before him stretched an ocean without limit. The dark sand of the desert spread further than sight could reach in every direction, and glittered like steel struck with bright light. . . . The sky was lit with an oriental splendour of insupportable purity, leaving nought for the imagination to desire. Heaven and earth were on fire. : : .

The Provençal threw his arms round the trunk of one of the palm trees, as though it were the body of a friend, and then in the shelter of the thin, straight shadow that the palm cast upon the granite, he wept. Then, sitting down, he remained as he was, contemplating with profound sadness the implacable scene, which was all he had to look upon. He cried aloud, to measure the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the hill, sounded faintly, and aroused no echo—the echo was in his own heart. The Provençal was twenty-two years old—he loaded his carbine.

"There'll be time enough," he said to himself, laying on the ground the weapon which alone could bring him to deliverance.

Looking by turns at the black expanse and the blue expanse, the soldier dreamt of France—he smelt with delight the gutters of Paris—he remembered the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his fellow-soldiers, the most minute details of his life. His southern fancy soon showed him the stones of his beloved Provence, in the play of the heat which waved over the spread sheet of the desert.

Fearing the danger of this cruel mirage, he went down the opposite side of the hill to that by which he had come up the day before. The remains of a rug showed that this place of refuge had at one time been inhabited; at a short distance he saw some palm trees full of dates. Then the instinct which binds us to life awoke again in his heart. He hoped to live long enough to await the passing of some Arabs, or perhaps he might hear the sound of cannon; for at this time Bonaparte was traversing Egypt.

This thought gave him new life. The palm tree seemed to bend with the weight of the ripe fruit. He shook some of it down. When he tasted this unhopèd-for manna, he felt sure that the palms had been cultivated by a former inhabitant—the savoury, fresh meat of the dates was proof of the care of his predecessor. He passed suddenly from dark despair to an almost insane joy.

He went up again to the top of the hill, and spent the rest of the day in cutting down one of the sterile palm trees, which the night before had served him for shelter. A vague memory made him think of the animals of the desert; and in case they might come to drink at the spring, visible from the base of the rocks but lost further down, he resolved to guard himself from their visits by placing a barrier at the entrance of his hermitage.

In spite of his diligence, and the strength which the fear of being devoured asleep gave him, he was unable to cut the palm in pieces, though he succeeded in cutting it down. At eventide the king of the desert fell; the sound of its fall resounded far and wide, like a sigh in the solitude; the soldier shuddered as though he had heard some voice predicting woe.

But like an heir who does not long bewail a deceased parent, he tore off from this beautiful tree the tall, broad green leaves which are its poetic adornment, and used them to mend the mat on which he was to sleep.

Fatigued by the heat and his work, he fell asleep under the red curtains of his wet cave.

In the middle of the night his sleep was troubled by an extraordinary noise; he sat up, and the deep silence around allowed him to distinguish the alternative accents of a respiration whose savage energy could not belong to a human creature.

A profound terror, increased still further by the darkness, the silence, and his waking

images, froze his heart within him. He almost felt his hair stand up on end, when, by straining his eyes to their utmost, he perceived through the shadow two faint, yellow lights. At first he attributed these lights to the reflection of his own pupils, but soon the vivid brilliance of the night aided him gradually to distinguish the objects around him in the cave, and he beheld a huge animal lying but two steps from him. Was it a lion, a tiger, or a crocodile?

The Provençal was not educated enough to know under what species his enemy ought to be classed; but his fright was all the greater, as his ignorance led him to imagine all terrors at once; he endured a cruel torture, noting every variation of the breathing close to him without daring to make the slightest movement. An odour, pungent like that of a fox, but more penetrating, profounder—so to speak—filled the cave, and when the Provençal became sensible of this, his terror reached its height, for he could no longer doubt the proximity of a terrible companion, whose royal dwelling served him for a shelter.

Presently the reflection of the moon descending on the horizon, lit up the den, rendering gradually visible and resplendent the spotted skin of a panther.

This lion of Egypt slept, curled up like a big dog, the peaceful possessor of a sumptuous niche at the gate of a hotel; its eyes opened for a moment and closed again; its face was turned towards the man.

A thousand confused thoughts passed through the Frenchman's mind; first he thought of killing it with a bullet from his gun, but he saw there was not enough distance between them for him to take proper aim—the shot would miss the mark. And if it were to wake!—the thought made his limbs rigid. He listened to his own heart beating in the midst of the silence, and cursed the too violent pulsations which the flow of blood brought on, fearing to disturb that sleep which allowed him time to think of some means of escape.

Twice he placed his hand on his scimitar, intending to cut off the head of his enemy; but the difficulty of cutting the stiff, short hair compelled him to abandon this daring project. To miss would be to die for *certain*, he thought; he preferred the chances of fair fight, and made up his mind to wait till morning; the morning did not leave him long to wait. He could now examine the panther at ease; its muzzle was smeared with blood.

"She's had a good dinner," he thought, without troubling himself as to whether her feast might have been on human flesh. "She won't be hungry when she gets up."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and flanks was glistening white; many small marks like velvet formed beautiful bracelets round her feet; her sinuous tail was also white, ending with black rings; the overpart of her dress, yellow like unburnished gold, very lissome and soft, had the characteristic blotches in the form of rosettes, which distinguish the panther from every other feline species.

This tranquil and formidable hostess snored in an attitude as graceful as that of a cat lying on a cushion. Her blood-stained paws, nervous and well armed, were stretched out before her face, which rested upon them, and from which radiated her straight, slender whiskers, like threads of silver.

If she had been like that in a cage, the Provençal would doubtless have admired the grace of the animal, and the vigorous contrasts of vivid colour which gave her robe an imperial splendour; but just then his sight was troubled by her sinister appearance.

The presence of the panther, even asleep, could not fail to produce the effect which the magnetic eyes of the serpent are said to have on the nightingale.

For a moment the courage of the soldier began to fail before this danger, though no doubt it would have risen at the mouth of a cannon charged with shell. Nevertheless, a bold thought brought daylight to his soul and sealed up the source of the cold sweat which sprang forth on his brow. Like men driven to bay, who defy death and offer their body to the smiter, so he, seeing in this merely a tragic episode, resolved to play his part with honour to the last.

"The day before yesterday the Arabs would have killed me, perhaps," he said; so, considering himself as good as dead already, he awaited bravely, with excited curiosity, his enemy's awakening.

When the sun appeared, the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then she put out her paws with energy, as if to stretch them and get rid of the cramp. At last she yawned, showing the formidable apparatus of her teeth and pointed tongue, rough as a file.

"A regular *petite maitresse*," thought the Frenchman, seeing her roll herself about so softly and coquettishly. She licked off the blood which stained her paws and

muzzle, and scratched her head with reiterated gestures full of prettiness. "All right, make a little toilet," the Frenchman said to himself, beginning to recover his gaiety with his courage; "we'll say good morning to each other presently," and he seized the small, short dagger which he had taken from the Mangrabins. At this moment the panther turned her head towards the man and looked at him fixedly without moving.

The rigidity of her metallic eyes and their insupportable lustre made him shudder, especially when the animal walked towards him. But he looked at her caressingly, staring into her eyes in order to magnetise her, and let her come quite close to him; then with a movement both gentle and amorous, as though he were caressing the most beautiful of women, he passed his hand over her whole body, from the head to the tail, scratching the flexible vertebrae which divided the panther's yellow back.

The animal waved her tail voluptuously, and her eyes grew gentle; and when, for the third time, the Frenchman accomplished this interested flattery, she gave forth one of those purrings by which our cats express their pleasure; but this murmur issued from a throat so powerful and so deep, that it resounded through the cave like the last vibrations of an organ in church.

The man, understanding the importance of his caresses, redoubled them in such a way as to surprise and stupefy his imperious courtesan. When he felt sure of having extinguished the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so fortunately been satisfied the day before, he got up to go out of the cave; the panther let him go out, but when he had reached the summit of the hill she sprang with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from twig to twig, and rubbed herself against his legs, putting up her back after the manner of all the race of cats. Then, regarding her guest with eyes whose glare had softened a little, she gave vent to that wild cry which naturalists compare with the grating of a saw.

"She is exacting," said the Frenchman, smiling.

He was bold enough to play with her ears; he caressed her belly and scratched her head as hard as he could. When he saw he was successful he tickled her skull with the point of his dagger, watching for the moment to kill her, but the hardness of her bones made him tremble for his success.

The sultana of the desert showed herself

gracious to her slave; she lifted her head, stretched out her neck, and manifested her delight by the tranquillity of her attitude. It suddenly occurred to the soldier that to kill this savage princess with one blow he must poignard her in the throat.

He raised the blade, when the panther, satisfied, no doubt, laid herself gracefully at his feet, and cast up at him glances in which, in spite of their natural fierceness, was mingled confusedly a kind of good-will. The poor Provençal ate his dates, leaning against one of the palm trees, and casting his eyes alternately on the desert in quest of some liberator and on his terrible companion to watch her uncertain clemency.

The panther looked at the place where the date stones fell, and every time that he threw one down her eyes expressed an incredible mistrust.

She examined the man with an almost commercial prudence. However, this examination was favourable to him, for when he had finished his meagre meal she licked his boots with her powerful, rough tongue, brushing off with marvellous skill the dust gathered in the creases.

"Ah, but when she's really hungry!" thought the Frenchman. In spite of the shudder this thought caused him, the soldier began to measure curiously the proportions of the panther, certainly one of the most splendid specimens of its race. She was three feet high and four feet long without counting her tail; this powerful weapon, rounded like a cudgel, was nearly three feet long.

The head, large as that of a lioness, was distinguished by a rare expression of refinement. The cold cruelty of a tiger was dominant, it was true, but there was also a vague resemblance to the face of a sensual woman. Indeed, the face of this solitary queen had something of the gaiety of a drunken Nero; she had satiated herself with blood, and she wanted to play.

The soldier tried if he might walk up and down, and the panther left him free, contenting herself with following him with her eyes, less like a faithful dog than a big Angora cat, observing everything, and every movement of her master.

When he looked round, he saw, by the spring, the remains of his horse; the panther had dragged the carcass all that way; about two-thirds of it had been devoured already. The sight reassured him.

It was easy to explain the panther's absence, and the respect she had had for

him while he slept. The first piece of good luck emboldened him to tempt the future, and he conceived the wild hope of continuing on good terms with the panther during the entire day, neglecting no means of taming her and remaining in her good graces.

He returned to her, and had the unspeakable joy of seeing her wag her tail with an almost imperceptible movement at his approach. He sat down then, without fear, by her side, and they began to play together; he took her paws and muzzle, pulled her ears, rolled her over on her back, stroked her warm, delicate flanks. She let him do whatever he liked, and when he began to stroke the hair on her feet she drew her claws in carefully.

The man, keeping the dagger in one hand, thought to plunge it into the belly of the too confiding panther, but he was afraid that he would be immediately strangled in her last convulsive struggle; besides, he felt in his heart a sort of remorse which bade him respect a creature that had done him no harm. He seemed to have found a friend, in a boundless desert; half unconsciously he thought of his first sweetheart, whom he had nicknamed "Mignonne" by way of contrast, because she was so atrociously jealous, that all the time of their love he was in fear of the knife with which she had always threatened him.

This memory of his early days suggested to him the idea of making the young panther answer to this name, now that he began to admire with less terror her swiftness, suppleness, and softness. Towards the end of the day he had familiarised himself with his perilous position; he now almost liked the painfulness of it. At last his companion had got into the habit of looking up at him whenever he cried in a falsetto voice: "Mignonne."

At the setting of the sun Mignonne gave, several times running, a profound, melancholy cry. "She's been well brought up," said the light-hearted soldier; "she says her prayers." But this mental joke only occurred to him when he noticed in what a pacific attitude his companion remained. "Come, *ma petite blonde*, I'll let you go to bed first," he said to her, counting on the activity of his own legs to run away as quickly as possible, directly she was asleep, and seek another shelter for the night.

The soldier awaited with impatience the hour of his flight, and when it had arrived he walked vigorously in the direction of the Nile; but hardly had he made a quarter of a

league in the sand when he heard the panther bounding after him, crying with that saw-like cry, more dreadful even than the sound of her leaping.

"Ah!" he said, "then she's taken a fancy to me; she has never met anyone before, and it is really quite flattering to have her first love."

That instant the man fell into one of those movable quicksands so terrible to travellers and from which it is impossible to save oneself. Feeling himself caught, he gave a shriek of alarm; the panther seized him with her teeth by the collar, and, springing vigorously backwards, drew him as if by magic out of the whirling sand.

"Ah, Mignonne!" cried the soldier, caressing her enthusiastically; "we're bound together for life and death—but no jokes, mind!" and he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert seemed inhabited. It contained a being to whom the man could talk, and whose ferocity was rendered gentle by him, though he could not explain to himself the reason for their strange friendship. Great as was the soldier's desire to stay on guard, he slept.

On awaking he could not find Mignonne; he mounted the hill, and in the distance saw her springing towards him after the habit of these animals, who cannot run on account of the extreme flexibility of the vertebral column. Mignonne arrived, her jaws covered with blood; she received the wonted caress of her companion, showing with much purring how happy it made her. Her eyes, full of languor, turned still more gently than the day before towards the Provençal, who talked to her as one would to a tame animal.

"Ah! Mademoiselle, you are a nice girl, aren't you? Just look at that! So we like to be made much of, don't we? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? So you have been eating some Arab or other, have you? That doesn't matter. They're animals just the same as you are; but don't you take to eating Frenchmen, or I shan't like you any longer."

She played like a dog with its master, letting herself be rolled over, knocked about, and stroked; alternately; sometimes she herself would provoke the soldier, putting up her paw with a soliciting gesture.

Some days passed in this manner. This companionship permitted the Provençal to appreciate the sublime beauty of the desert; now that he had a living thing to think about, alternations of fear and quiet,

and plenty to eat, his mind became filled with contrasts and his life began to be diversified.

Solitude revealed to him all her secrets, and enveloped him in her delights. He discovered in the rising and the setting of the sun sights unknown to the world. He knew what it was to tremble when he heard over his head the hiss of a bird's wings, so rarely did they pass, or when he saw the clouds, changing and many coloured travellers, melt one into another.

He studied in the night time the effects of the moon upon the ocean of sand, where the simoon made waves swift of movement and rapid in their change.

He lived the life of the Eastern day, marveling at its wonderful pomp; then, after having reveled in the sight of a hurricane over the plain where the whirling sands made red, dry mists and death-bearing clouds, he would welcome the night with joy, for then fell the healthful freshness of the stars, and he listened to imaginary music in the skies. Then solitude taught him to unroll the treasures of dreams. He passed whole hours in remembering mere nothings, and comparing his present life with his past.

At last he grew passionately fond of the panther; for some sort of affection was a necessity.

Whether it was that his will, powerfully projected, had modified the character of his companion, or whether, because she found abundant food in her predatory excursions in the deserts, she respected this man's life, he began to fear for it no longer, seeing her so well tamed.

He devoted the greater part of his time to sleep, but he was obliged to watch like a spider in its web that the moment of his deliverance might not escape him, if anyone should pass the line marked by the horizon. He had sacrificed his shirt to make a flag with, which he hung at the top of a palm tree, whose foliage he had torn off. Taught by necessity, he found the means of keeping it spread out, by fastening it with little sticks; for the wind might not be blowing at the moment when the passing traveller was looking through the desert.

It was during the long hours, when he had abandoned hope, that he amused himself with the panther. He had come to learn the different inflections of her voice, the expressions of her eyes; he had studied the capricious patterns of all the rosettes which marked the gold of her robe. Mignonne was not even angry when he took hold of

the tuft at the end of her tail to count the rings, those graceful ornaments which glittered in the sun like jewellery.

It gave him pleasure to contemplate the supple, fine outlines of her form, the graceful pose of her head. But it was especially when she was playing that he felt most pleasure in looking at her; the agility and youthful lightness of her movements were a continual surprise to him; he wondered at the supple way in which she jumped and climbed, washed herself, and arranged her fur, crouched down and prepared to spring. However rapid her spring might be, however slippery the stone she was on, she would always stop short at the word "Mignonne."

One day, in a bright mid-day sun, an enormous bird coursed through the air. The man left his panther to look at this new guest; but after waiting a moment, the deserted sultana growled deeply.

"My goodness! I do believe she's jealous," he cried, seeing her eyes become hard again; "the soul of Virginie has passed into her body, that's certain."

The eagle disappeared into the air, whilst the soldier admired the curved contour of the panther.

But there was such youth and grace in her form! She was beautiful as a woman! The blond fur of her robe mingled well with the delicate tints of faint white which marked her flanks.

The profuse light cast down by the sun made this living gold, these russet markings, to burn in a way to give them an indefinable attraction.

The man and the panther looked at one another with a look full of meaning; the coquette quivered when she felt her friend stroke her head; her eyes flashed like lightning—then she shut them tightly.

"She has a soul," he said, looking at the stillness of this queen of the sands, golden like them, white like them, solitary and burning like them.

* * * * *

"Well," she said, "I have read your plea in favour of beasts; but how did two so well adapted to understand each other end?"

"Ah, well, you see, they ended as all great passions do end—by a misunderstanding. For some reason *one* suspects the other of treason; they don't come to an explanation through pride, and quarrel and part from sheer obstinacy."

"Yet sometimes at the best moments a single word or a look are enough—but, anyhow, go on with your story."

"It's horribly difficult, but you will understand, after what the old villain told me over his champagne. He said: 'I don't know if I hurt her, but she turned round, as if enraged, and with her sharp teeth caught hold of my leg—gently, I daresay; but I, thinking she would devour me, plunged my dagger into her throat.

"She rolled over, giving a cry that froze my heart; and I saw her dying, still looking at me without anger. I would have given all the world—my cross even, which I had not got then—to have brought her to life again. It was as though I had murdered a real person; and the soldiers, who had seen my flag, and were come to my assistance, found me in tears:

"Well, sir,' he said, after a moment of silence, 'since then I have been in war in Germany, in Spain, in Russia, in France; I've certainly carried my carcase about a good deal, but never have I seen anything like the desert. Ah! yes, it is very beautiful!'

"What did you feel there?' I asked him:

"Oh! that can't be described, young man! Besides, I am not always regretting my palm trees and my panther. I should have to be melancholy for that. In the desert, you see, there is everything, and nothing."

"Yes, but explain——"

"Well,' he said, with an impatient gesture, 'it is God without mankind.'"

THE CUP OF TEARS.

By ARISTOTLE KOURTIDES. (From the Greek. Translated by Mrs. Edmonds.)

Mr. Kourtides (whose story, "Two Little Boots," appeared in THE NOVEL MAGAZINE last November) is a native of Thrace, but now resides in one of the suburbs of Athens. He is best known by his children's stories, which are much sought after for the leading Greek periodicals, and eagerly read. In serious work, his essays on the child mind and imagination have won him considerable fame.

TIMOLEON was ill, very ill; his body was so wasted away that he was nothing but skin and bone; his face had become as white as a wax taper. Oh, it was piteous to see him!

One night he was in great danger—the doctor himself had said so; his mother sat by his bedside near him, and held his burning hand. It was past midnight, but the unhappy mother hung over her ailing child. Suddenly in his delirium he awoke from a heavy sleep, then he turned towards his mother, and, as if he feared something, he clasped her convulsively, and laying his head down upon her knees went to sleep.

And he saw a dream:

It appeared to him that he went up to Heaven, and that an angel with a beautiful face and with two large, white wings opened a great door and beckoned him in.

Timoleon went in and found himself in a magnificent room: The floor was covered with carpets embroidered with real flowers; on the walls there were painted birds, but they were real ones, and they warbled each in their place:

Opposite the door there was a golden

throne, ornamented by thousands of little angels in pearls, emeralds, and rubies; and strange it was, but these angels moved their wings, and filled the room with a soft light, which floated through it. And God—God Himself, Whose countenance gave forth as much light as that of thousands of suns, and on account of this Timoleon could not look up, but from afar he heard the voices of the angels who sang His glory, and their voices were so sweet, and the hymn which they sang was so moving, that Timoleon, transfixed with amazement, stood still in the place where he first found himself. Never had he imagined such things.

Suddenly the angels ceased, and a voice from the throne said:

"Timoleon, come hither. I am God thy Father."

And Timoleon, his heart throbbing within him, drew nearer.

The light which emanated from the face of God was not like that of the sun, because he could not have borne it, but the light which he saw, although greater, was more pleasant. It seemed to him as though it shed light into his soul:

Timoleon approached the throne of God:

"Timoleon, My son," said the voice, "thou art sick and like to die, but dost thou see this cup (He showed him a golden cup)? If thou canst find anyone who will fill this with tears, then thou shalt not die."

Timoleon began to tremble. Who would weep so much for him as to fill that cup in order to save him? Not he himself could shed so many tears, therefore he must die.

Die! Ah, he did not wish to die—he did not wish to be wrapped in a winding-sheet, and to be carried off amid psalmodies to be laid in a grave, and all to go away and leave him alone with the dead in the cemetery. He was afraid—afraid. And in his despair he said:

"No one will be found in the whole world who will shed so many tears to save me!"

"The cup—where is the cup?" cried an agonised voice suddenly at the door, and at that moment there rushed into the room a woman, who seemed beside herself, with disheveled hair and stretching out her hands towards the throne of God.

Timoleon shivered when he heard that voice, for it was well known to him. He raised his head and saw the woman through his tears.

It was his mother, and she held in her hands the golden cup and wept—and wept! The tears ran like pearly rains; they flowed—and flowed. And when would they cease? An endless fount seemed to come from her heart, which was full of love and tears; the cup was filled—it overflowed the brim—and yet they did not cease; they fell on to the carpet, and were so burning that they withered the flowers which were embroidered on it. Oh, how many more tears had his mother to give for Timoleon?

The living birds that were on the walls of God's chamber ceased their lovely warbling, and the pearl, emerald, and ruby angels on the throne moved their wings no more. All were motionless at that mother's wonderful love.

But the mother's heart was fearful lest what she had done was not enough to save her child, and she knelt down as she gave back the cup to God, and in an agitated voice cried out her maternal anguish:

"Save—save my child, O God, and take my life instead!"

"Thy child is saved," answered God, "and thou shalt live to see him great and good; thy tears have saved him; if thou hadst not loved him so much he would have died."

And then the mother rushed to him, and taking Timoleon in her arms, went out of

the room, and as she passed along the angels out of respect drew back on either side.

On their way she clasped him fervently to her breast, and tears fell upon his face, and as she kissed him she whispered softly:

"My dear, dear child!"

Timoleon also embraced his good and loving mother, who had not left him to die, and kissed her, with tears of joy and gratitude, whispering:

"Mother—mother——"

He awoke.

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The sun had risen, the birds were singing sweetly upon the trees in their garden, and the flowers were shedding abroad their early morning fragrance. A ray of sunshine which shot across the bed where Timoleon was lying, awakened him. He was still embraced by his mother.

"Oh, what a strange dream was that which I have seen! Was it—was it a dream?"

If it were a dream, why, when he awoke, did he see that his mother was embracing and bending over him, looking at him with a glance full of inexhaustible love, and weeping—weeping—as boundlessly as there in the house of God. Was it a dream? And had not his mother's tears saved him from dying? And yet, oh, joy! He was conscious of an unaccustomed fresh feeling in his body; he felt it lighter, just as if the bad illness which had weighed him down had flown away, and he thought that a sweet voice spoke to his heart: "Thou shalt get well, Timoleon; thou shalt not die."

When the doctor came after a little while, and he examined him again and again, he rose with joy and said to the mother:

"Thy child is saved."

The mother then embraced Timoleon afresh, and tears of joy fell upon his face as she whispered softly, whilst she kissed him:

"My dear, dear child."

Then Timoleon thought of his dream, and of the words which God had said to his mother.

"Thy child is saved; thy tears have saved him; if thou hadst not loved him so much he would have died," and he kissed his mother passionately, and pressed his little lips against hers, and from the depths of his heart, in a voice of the greatest tenderness, he said to her who had twice given him his life:

"Mother, I thank thee."

The Choked Carburetter.

By ADA and DUDLEY JAMES.

The story of a motor-car mishap and the influence it had on a matrimonial misunderstanding.

"NO, I won't!" said Lady Dorothy Shannon, with adorable firmness.

"It's a forty-horse Casimir-Jauneville!" urged Freddy Hales.

"I don't care if it's a three hundred and forty-horse," she exclaimed recklessly. "I promised Tom I wouldn't motor alone with you again, and I'm not going to!" She dimpled over with delicious laughter. "He's quite inclined to be jealous of you. Isn't it perfectly absurd?"

"I don't see it," he returned, a trifle stiffly.

"I don't suppose you would," she retorted; "that's what makes it so funny!"

"Was it the lunch at St. Albans?" he asked.

"I didn't tell him," she replied incautiously.

"Ah! then you *were* afraid," he said, brightening.

"I wasn't in the least," she said, with immense dignity. "I didn't tell him, because—I didn't tell him."

"Then, don't tell him this time: By the by—where is your ogre to-day?"

"I forbid you to call him that: He's not an ogre—he's a dear boy, really, and I misuse him shamefully: As a matter of fact, he's speaking at the Brighton bye-election to-night—he motored down this morning—the candidate is to dine and sleep him."

"Admirable!" cried Freddy: "We could have our run down into Surrey, dine somewhere, and you could be home like a good girl before ten o'clock." She was silent. He dangled the lure again: "Shall we try her up Westerham or Titsey Hill?"

"Oh, Titsey's the better test!" she cried impulsively. Then she checked herself. "It really doesn't matter to me; I'm not going to try her up either hill."

Looking up he detected a shade of irre-

solution in her eye, though there was none in her voice. Again he dangled the lure. "My man Baker swears she'd do it on her second."

Lady Dorothy was sorely tempted:

Motoring was her latest and most absorbing passion: Not content to be a mere passenger, she was herself an expert driver, and had taken up the art and science of motoring with white-hot enthusiasm.

"I could bring it round in half-an-hour," he urged.

"It wouldn't be the slightest use," she said; "besides, my coat isn't thick enough for this weather."

"Where's your new Russian pony-skin you were telling me about?"

She clasped her hands ecstatically: "Oh, I had forgotten all about that! I was keeping it as a surprise for Tom."

"Wear it to-day in my car," urged the tempter; "you can surprise him with it later."

"Shall I?" she said irresolutely:

* * * * *

She watched the speed indicator rise well above the twenties as they flitted across Mitcham Common:

"You might let her out a bit here," urged the little figure in the pony-skin coat, and she laughed delightedly as the indicator pointer crept up and up.

"Not much wrong with her, eh?" said Freddy happily, as he slowed down for a corner.

A sudden thought struck her: "Don't choose too big a hotel for dinner: I don't want to run up against anyone I know."

"What a pity you can't dine in that new mask and veil," laughed Freddy, looking down on the shrouded little person beside him. "No one would know you then; not even Shannon himself!"

"Don't speak of Tom!" she said hastily;

"I daren't think of him: I *won't* think of him. Let her out a bit more along here!"

And together they sped recklessly on: The strange exhilaration of high speed crept into their very bones. Purley, Caterham and Godstone flew past, and when the redoubtable Titsey Hill melted under the second speed, even Baker the chauffeur, sitting behind in the tonneau, forgot his imperturbability and chuckled aloud. The summit reached, at Dorothy's request they turned and flew down again, and presently found themselves at Redhill.

"The very place for dinner!" cried Freddy. "We are safe to meet none of our lot here."

The dinner was fair, the wine excellent; and enthusing together over the merits of the new car and other and more intimate matters, they allowed the time to slip away:

It was Dorothy who at last realised with a little scream of dismay how late it was. Even then Freddy would have prolonged the delightful *l'le-à-l'le*, but she was firm, and together they slipped on their coats and went out into the night. Baker was ready for them with lighted lamps, the forty-horses champing gently under the bonnet:

"You and I will sit together in the tonneau going home, and Baker shall drive," whispered Freddy meaningly in her ear: -

Dorothy edged a little from him. "You may sit where you like," she said provokingly. "I prefer the front seat!" and before either Freddy or Baker could lend her a helping hand, she had established herself as before.

His face fell. "I'll drive, after all, Baker," he said curtly, and took the wheel.

"Good gracious!" said Lady Dorothy a little later, catching sight of a clock as they passed through Merstham. "Is it as late as that?" She made a rapid calculation. "Oh, do drive hard; don't leave me time to think: I shan't be back until eleven even if everything goes right."

"But everything is going right," replied Freddy confidently:

If motors have a sense of humour the Casimir-Jauneville must have been smiling grimly under its bonnet at that moment. For at once an ominous jolting and bumping proclaimed a punctured tyre.

Freddy pulled up instantly, unshipped the big acetylene lamp from the front and illumined the seat of trouble:

"That's it, sir," said Baker, extracting a rusty horse-shoe nail from the tyre; "we shall have to put in a new inner tube—lucky I brought two spare ones," and silently he set to work.

Freddy walked round to the little, drooping figure on the front seat. "I'm fearfully sorry!" he said apologetically.

"So am I," replied Lady Dorothy; "but it can't be helped. Be as quick as you can!" and she sat there, looking out into the darkness, while unwonted feelings of repentance began to creep over her.

Why had she come? she asked herself. "Why the dickens didn't I say 'No'?" she murmured with more force than elegance. "If Tom were only a brute I shouldn't mind, but he's not a brute, and I've broken my word, and I'm a little beast."

"Isn't it nearly done?" she called out over the tonneau, after an unreasonably short space of time:

"No, it isn't," replied Freddy irritably: Taking off a stiff new outer cover is trying equally to the knuckles and the temper.

"I must do something to help!" she said feverishly. "I'll hold the light for you," and for the next twenty minutes she bravely supported the heavy lamp, while the two men struggled with and conquered the refractory tyre:

Once more they drove into the darkness, and as they went on in silence they felt the first few drops of rain spatter into their faces.

Freddy looked at the sky. "It will soon pass over," he said confidently. But it did not pass over, the drops became a steady rain, the rain became a downpour: "I wish I'd had the hood fitted. I oughtn't to have asked you to come out without it," he said penitently:

Dorothy set her teeth. It was difficult even to be courteous when a cold stream was trickling down her neck from the soaked veil. "Never mind, so long as we get home."

Freddy whispered something to the forty-horses, and they responded nobly, until a distinct side-slip at a greasy corner made him moderate the pace.

"The governor will have us all in kingdom-come if he don't mind!" muttered Baker in the tonneau, peering ahead, but seeing nothing save the glare of the lamps reflected on the pitiless rain. Presently, to his relief, the pace sensibly slackened up a slight rise.

"I say, Baker, I suppose we have plenty of petrol?" asked Freddy over his shoulder, as he shifted to the second speed.

"Yes, sir; I filled up the tank before we started," responded the chauffeur.

Dorothy felt a chill of premonition. A loss of power might mean so many things. The engine laboured on as Freddy dropped to the third speed.

"What's got her?" he muttered viciously, sending a pumpful of oil into the engine. Whatever it was that the forty-horses required it was not lubrication, for almost at once, even on the lowest speed, the engine slackened, faltered, and finally stopped, while the rain poured down in one relentless sheet.

Baker had already got his head under the bonnet. "The carburetter's empty, sir," he reported.

"Shake the float up and down," commanded Freddy.

"I have, sir," was the response, "but it won't come. I'm afraid the pipe's got choked."

A chill fear struck to Dorothy's heart. It was not her first experience of choked carburetters, and she knew that in the dark and driving rain it might be an hour's job at the very least.

"Where are we?" asked Dorothy, a plaintive little catch in her voice.

"Don't exactly know," said Freddy morosely. "On the Brighton road somewhere. On a night like this one might be two yards or two miles from shelter."

"What shall we do?" she asked.

He thought a minute. Their situation was pretty desperate. Even if the repair only took an hour they would not be home till after midnight, and it might take much longer.

"I must get shelter for you somewhere," he said, looking at her helplessly. "If only another car came along I'd ask them to take you back to town. No one would know you in that veil and mask."

"No," she answered; "I don't suppose they would."

"Meanwhile," he said, "come and sit in the tonneau, and I'll spread this apron over you. We'll take down the carburetter as quickly as possible."

There was nothing else for it, and Dorothy crouched there, a prey to the liveliest feelings of remorse she had ever experienced in her short life. The rain poured pitilessly down, the two men worked their hardest, the Brighton Road seemed as deserted

as the Sahara. Not even a belated cart came by, and it seemed to Dorothy as if hours had passed before she heard a welcome *teuf-teuf* in the distance. In a few moments the strange car was close up, and courteously slowed down at the sight of the two men toiling in the light of the acetylene lamp.

A voice rang out through the darkness: "Can we be of any assistance?"

Dorothy smothered a scream: "Oh, no, Freddy, don't ask him—it's Tom!" she cried in an agonised whisper. But she was too late. Freddy, seeing a chance of release for her, had stepped briskly up to the car.

"We've got a little trouble with our carburetter; if you would be kind enough to give this lady a lift into town I should be very grateful."

"Hullo, Hales, is that you? I'm Shannon!" said a well-known voice. "Delighted, I'm sure!"

Freddy collapsed in horror. What a ghastly mischance! He stared so long at the dim figure behind the glare of the lamps that Shannon repeated his offer with a touch of impatience.

"I—I thought you were speaking at Brighton?" blurted out Freddy stupidly.

"I was," he answered, "but I had a wire from the Whip to say a critical division was expected to-night, and that I was to cancel my engagements, and come up at once. I'm on my way to the House now; I'm in a great hurry. Perhaps your friend—"

"My—er—cousin!" corrected Freddy desperately; "I'll ask her."

"Tell your—er—cousin," said Shannon, with a slight smile; "I shall have to go to the House first, then my man shall drive her anywhere she wishes."

Dorothy beneath the apron in the tonneau had heard every word. A desperate plan had been rapidly maturing in her mind, and Shannon's last words decided it. No one would know her in her new mask and coat; Freddy had said so. As for her voice, she could manage that. Tom, she knew, was the last man in the world to desire to converse with a strange woman picked up under such circumstances. A little taciturnity on her side, and matters would arrange themselves. Should she risk it?

Freddy came helplessly up: "It's Shannon himself!" he groaned. "I had no idea! He's offered to take you home—what on earth shall I say?"

"Say?" echoed Dorothy. "Why, say

"I'm very much obliged, and I'm coming!"—and he listened in amazement while she whispered her desperate project in his ear:

"Save me all the talking you can," commanded Dorothy, pushing him towards the car.

Freddy, with an effort, rose to the occasion, and astonished Shannon by his unwonted volubility while his silent companion was installed in the vacant seat:

The car started Londonwards, leaving Freddy Hales staring after it in bewilderment:

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"I'm afraid you're very wet," said Shannon politely, through the gloom, to the shrouded figure by his side.

"Yes," returned a muffled voice from the recesses of a wet veil:

"We shall soon be in London," he pursued encouragingly, as they flew along the streaming roads. To this his companion vouchsafed no answer at all; and Shannon, feeling that he had paid sufficient attention to the amenities, heaved a sigh of relief and relapsed into silence, busy with his own thoughts:

Dorothy heard the sigh and smiled: She was safe now, she knew: He would break the silence no more until he politely took his leave of her at the House; she would be dropped at the nearest Underground Station, and he would never know of her escapade and the part he had involuntarily played in it:

The car made excellent time: Croydon slipped quickly by, and Dorothy was left alone with her thoughts:

Certainly they were not pleasant ones, and as she stole a glance at the familiar, stern, clear-cut profile by her side, she felt a sudden thrill of abasement and repentance:

Shannon, on his part, was glad of the silence, glad to be able to resume a train of thought which had been rudely interrupted. No one—not even Dorothy herself—had any idea what force of passionate love he concealed under his somewhat unemotional exterior, yet his relations with his wife had been of late far from satisfactory:

He reviewed in his mind the events of the last few months. Had he treated her wisely? he asked himself. Was he not inclined to regard her harmless escapades—for harmless in his inmost heart he knew them to be—too seriously?

Long afterwards Tom Shannon wondered why his thoughts during that ride should have so persistently turned to his wife. Was it pure chance? Or did some subtle emanation of her personality influence him in the gloom?

The car purred gently along. Had he been too severe? Gradually as he sat there he became convinced of his mistake, and in a glow of generous emotion he resolved that, come what might, he would try to hold her to him by love—love and perfect confidence. He vowed to himself that, abandoning all prohibitions and restraint, he would—

Suddenly he felt a little hand laid timidly on his arm.

"Tom!" breathed a familiar voice out of the darkness.

He started violently, and turned sharply round. Recognising his wife in a flash he stared at her in silence, while the events of the last half hour and their significance rushed in upon him.

Dorothy began to tell him of her temptation, of her broken promise—of everything: He hardly heard her—his thoughts busily engaged elsewhere. Well for her, well for him, well for both of them, that he had resolved on a certain line of action, and that, having resolved on it, he was not the man to draw back. Otherwise, in those first moments, things might have been said which would have wrecked their future irretrievably:

Her story faltered to its conclusion, and ceased. For a moment he could not trust himself to speak; then, regaining his self-command, he broke silence for the first time.

"Dorothy dear," he began tenderly, and, slipping his arm round the little figure, he drew her closely to him. "Heaven knows, we have drifted far enough apart the last few weeks; don't let us drift any further." And the chauffeur on the front seat, bending over the steering-wheel, wondered at the low, earnest conversation which his usually taciturn master was holding with the little lady they had picked up on the road:

* * * * *

"It's not like you to fail us at a pinch," said the Chief Whip discontentedly to Shannon the day after. "What on earth delayed you on your way up from Brighton?"

"Urgent private affairs!" replied Shannon with a twinkle.

N.B.—The Editor thinks he knows a really good story when he sees one. This is one of the very best.

The Castlecourt Diamond Case.

By GERALDINE BONNER.

The Statement of Sophy Jeffers, Lady's Maid to the Marchioness of Castlecourt.

I HAD been in Lady Castlecourt's service two years when the Castlecourt diamonds were stolen. At the time we were staying in London for the season, where my lord and lady occupied a suite of rooms at Burridge's Hotel.

The evening of the robbery my lady was going to dinner at the Duke of Duxbury's. In the afternoon I got everything ready for her, and put the leather case containing the diamonds on the dressing-table in her bedroom.

I was talking in the sitting-room with Chawlmers (my lord's man) when I thought I heard a rustle of skirts in the bedroom. I went in at once, and seeing nothing opened the door on to the landing, but no one was about.

While I was dressing my lady she took up the leather case, but when she opened it she found the jewels were missing. Chawlmers and myself were suspected by the detectives who were called in of being concerned in the theft.

The next morning we heard of the disappearance of Sara Wight, one of the housemaids on our floor. There was every sign of a hurried flight, and from descriptions Sara Wight was supposed to be a thief well known in America as Laura the Lady. Suspicion then fell on her.

■ ■ ■

Statement of Lily Bingham, known to the police as Laura the Lady, and figuring as a housemaid at Burridge's Hotel under the alias of Sara Wight.

I HAD long had my eye on the Castlecourt diamonds, and knowing that Lord and Lady Castlecourt were staying at Burridge's, I obtained a situation as housemaid of their suite. I had every opportunity of watching my lady's movements, and made friends with Sophy Jeffers, her maid.

On the day I took the jewels Jeffers had laid out Lady Castlecourt's clothes, together with the case containing the diamonds,

in my lady's bedroom: I darted in and took the diamonds out of the case while Jeffers was talking with Chawlmers, my lord's man, in the sitting-room.

Jeffers heard me as I went out. She was in the room almost as I closed the door. Before she could have got on to the landing I was in a cupboard hunting for a dustpan. But she evidently suspected nothing.

I stole out of the hotel and back to Tom, my husband, at our flat in Knightsbridge.

We unmounted the diamonds, and I carried them about in a bag pinned inside my bodice.

One night Tom and I went out with the intention of going to the theatre. I had suspicions that our cab was being followed, and under cover of the fog we slipped into the house of a Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, Americans with great social ambitions, passing ourselves off as Major and Mrs. Thatcher.

Towards the end of the evening I took the bag of diamonds out of my dress, and leaning towards Mrs. Kennedy, asked her to give it to a mythical Amelia. Mrs. Kennedy, who I could see was unwilling to acknowledge her ignorance of "Amelia," acquiesced. I was most relieved to be quit of the jewels, though the connection of our gang with them did not end there.

■ ■ ■

Statement of Cassius P. Kennedy, formerly of Necropolis City, Ohio, now Manager of the London Branch of the Colonial Box, Tub, and Cordage Company (Ltd.) of Chicago and St. Louis.

WE had been in London two years when a series of extraordinary events took place which involved us, through no fault of our own, in the most unpleasant predicament that ever overtook two decent Americans in a foreign country.

I had been sent over to start the English branch of the Colonial Box, Tub, and Cordage Company, one of the biggest concerns of the Middle West, and it wasn't two months before I realised that the venture would catch on, and I was

going to be at the head of a booming business.

I'd brought my wife and little girl along with me. We'd been married five years—met in Necropolis City, and lived there and afterwards in Chicago, where I got my first big promotion. She was Daisy K. Fairweather, of Buncumville, Indiana, and had been the belle of the place. She'd also attracted considerable attention in St. Louis and Kansas City, where she'd visited a good deal. There was nothing green about Daisy K. Fairweather—never had been.

Daisy and I didn't know many people when we first came over, but that little woman wasn't here six months before she'd sized up everything in sight, and made up her mind just how and where she was going to butt in. The first thing she did was to conform to those particular ones among the local customs that seemed to her the most high-toned.

In Chicago we'd always dined at half-past six, and given the hired girls every Thursday off. In London we dined the first year at half-past seven, and the second at half-past eight. We had four servants and a butler called Perkins, who ran everything in sight—myself included. I always dressed for dinner after Perkins came, and tried to look as if it were my lifelong custom. I'd have sunk out of sight in a sea of shame rather than have had Perkins think I hadn't been brought up to it.

Daisy caught on to everything, and then passed the word on to me. She was always springing innovations on me, and I did the best I could to keep my end up. She stopped talking the way she used to in Necropolis City and made Elaine—that's our little girl—stop calling me "Poppa" and call me "Daddy."

She called her front hair her "fringe," and her shirt-waist her "bloos," and she made me careful of what I said before the servants. "Servants talk so!" she'd say, just as if she'd heard them. In Necropolis City, or even Chicago, we never bothered about the "helps" talking. They said what they wanted and we said what we wanted, and that was the end of it. But I supposed it was all right. Whatever Daisy K. Fairweather Kennedy says I do.

By the second season Daisy'd broken quite a way into Society, and knew a bishop and two lords. We were asked out a great deal, and we'd some smart little dinners at our own shanty—15 Hanley Street, near Walworth Crescent, a thirty-five foot, four-

storey edifice that we paid the same rent for you'd pay for a seven-room flat in Chicago. Daisy by this time was in with all kinds of push. She was what she called a "success." Nights when we didn't go out she'd sit with me and say:

"Well, I don't really see how I'll ever be able to live in Chicago again, and Necropolis City would certainly kill me."

This same season Lady Clara Gyves dined with us twice (it was a great step, Daisy said, and I took it for granted she knew), and once at a reception Daisy stood right up close to the Marchioness of Castlecourt, the greatest beauty in London, and watched her drink a cup of tea. Daisy didn't meet her that time, but she said to me:

"Next season I'll know her, and the season after that, if we're careful, I'll dine with her. Then, Cassius P. Kennedy, we shall have arrived!"

I said "Sure!" That's what I mostly say to her, because she's mostly right. You don't often find that little woman making breaks.

It was in our third season in London, the time the middle of May, when the things occurred of which I have made mention at the beginning of my statement. It was this way:

We'd been going out a good deal, pretty nearly every night, and we were glad to have, for once, a quiet evening at home. Of course that doesn't mean the same as it does in Necropolis City or even Chicago. We dine, just the same, at half-past eight, and both of us dress for dinner. We have to, Daisy says, no matter how we feel, because of the servants.

The servants in London are good servants all right, but the way you have to avoid shocking their sensitive feelings sometimes makes a free-born American rebellious. I like to think I'm an object of interest to my fellow creatures, but it's a good deal of a bother to have it on your mind that you mustn't destroy the illusions of the butler or upset the ideals of the cook.

As we were waiting for dinner to be announced we heard a cab rattle up and stop, as it seemed, at our door. We looked at each other with inquiring eyes, and then heard the cab go off—on the jump, I should say, by the noise it made—and a minute later the bell rang sharply and quickly. Perkins opened the door, and Daisy and I heard a lady's voice, very sweet and sort of drawling, say something in the hall.

I peeped through the curtains, and there

was a man and a woman—a distinguished-looking pair—taking off their coats and prinking themselves up at the hall mirror. I'd never seen either of them before, as far as I could remember, but I could tell by their general make-up that they were the real thing—the kind Daisy was always cultivating and asking to dinner.

I stepped back, and said to her, in a whisper :

"Somebody's come to dinner, and you've forgotten all about it."

She shook her head and whispered back :
"I haven't asked anyone to dinner ; I'm sure I haven't."

"Well, they're here, whether we've asked them or not," I hissed, "and you can't turn 'em out. They expect to be fed."

"Who are they ?"

"Search me ! Friends of yours I've never seen."

"For pity's sake, don't look surprised. Try to pretend it's all right."

We lined up by the fireplace, and got our smiles all ready. The portière was drawn, and Perkins announced :

"Major and Mrs. Thatcher."

They sailed smilingly into the room, the woman ahead, rustling in a long, sparkly, black dress. To my certain knowledge, I'd never seen either of them before.

The woman was very pretty ; not pretty in the sense that Daisy is, with beautiful features and a perfect complexion, but slim, and pale, and smart-looking. She had black hair with a little wreath of red flowers in it, and the whitest neck I ever saw. She evidently thought she was all right as far as herself and the house and the dinner were concerned, for she was perfectly serene, and easy as an old shoe.

The man behind her was a big, handsome, dense chap—just home from India, they said, and he looked it. He'd that dull way those swell Army fellows sometimes have ; it goes with a long moustache and an eyeglass.

I looked out of the corner of my eye at Daisy, and I knew by her face she couldn't remember either of them. But they were the right sort, and she wasn't going to be muddled by any situation that could boil up out of the Society pool. She was just as easy as they were. She'd a smile on her face like a child, and she said the little, mild, milky things women say just as milkily and mildly as though she were greeting her life-long friends.

Well, it went along as smoothly as a summer sea. They introduced themselves

as Major and Mrs. Thatcher, and told a lot about their life and their movements—all of which I could see Daisy greedily gathering in. I didn't know whether she remembered them or not, but I didn't think she did, she was so careful about alluding to places where she had met them.

They seemed to know her all right—Mrs. Thatcher especially. She'd allude to smart houses where Daisy had been asked, and toney people that were getting to be friends of Daisy's. She seemed to be right in the best circles herself. I wouldn't like to say how many times she mentioned the names of earls and lords ; one of them, Baron—some name like Fiddlesticks—she said was her cousin.

They didn't stay long after dinner. I don't think I sat ten minutes with the major—and it was a dull ten minutes, and no mistake. There was nothing light and airy about him. He asked me about Chicago (which he pronounced "Chick-ago"), and said he had heard there was good sport in the Rocky Mountains, and thought of going there to hunt the Great Auk. I didn't know what the Great Auk was, and I asked him. He looked blankly at me, and said he believed a "large form of bird," which surprised me, as I had an idea it was a Pre-Adamite beast, like a behemoth.

I was glad to have the major go, not only because he was so dull, but because I was so dying to find out from Daisy if she'd placed them and who they were. They were hardly on the steps and the front door shut on them before I was back in the drawing-room.

"Who are they, for Heavens' sake ?" I burst out.

She shook her head, laughing a little, and looking utterly bewildered.

"My dear boy," she said, "I haven't the least idea. It's the most extraordinary thing I ever knew."

"Isn't there anything about them you remember ? Didn't they say something that gave you a clue ?"

"Not a word, and yet they seem to know me so well. The queerest thing of all was when you were in the dining-room with the man, the woman, in the most confidential tone, began to ask me about someone called Amelia. It was too dreadful ! I hadn't the faintest notion what she meant."

"What did you say ? I'll lay ten to one you were equal to it."

"I realised it was desperate, and, after going through dinner so creditably, I wasn't going to break down over the coffee. She said: 'How about poor Amelia?' I knew by that 'poor' and by the expression of her face it was something unusual and queer. I thought a minute, and then looked as solemn as I could, and answered: 'Really, the subject is a very painful one to me. I'd rather not talk about it.'"

We both roared. It was so like Daisy to be ready that way!

"And then—this is the strangest part of all—she put her hand in the front of her dress and drew out some little thing of chamois leather, and told me to give it to Amelia from her. I tried to stop her, but it was too late. She put it here in the crystal bowl."

Daisy went to the bowl, and took out a little limp sack of chamois leather.

"It feels like pebbles," she said, pinching it.

And then she opened it and shook the "pebbles" into her hand. I bent down to look at them, my head close to hers. The palm of her hand was covered with small, sparkling crystals of different sizes and very bright. We looked at them, and then at one another. They were diamonds!

For a moment we didn't either of us say anything. Daisy had been laughing, and her laugh died away into a sort of scared giggle. Her hand began to shake a little, and it made the diamonds send out gleams in all directions.

"What—what—does it mean?" she said, with a low sort of gasp.

I just looked at them and shook my head. But I felt a cold sinking in that part of my organism where my courage is usually screwed to the sticking-place.

"Are they real, do you think?" she said again, and she took the evening paper, and poured them out on to it.

Spread out that way, they looked most awfully numerous and rich. There must have been more than a hundred of them of different sizes, and shaking about on the surface of the paper made them shine and sparkle like stars.

"It's a fortune, Cassius," she said, almost in a whisper; "it's a fortune in diamonds. Why did she leave them?"

"Didn't she say they were for Amelia?" I said, in a hollow tone.

"Yes; but who is Amelia? How will we ever find her? What shall we do? It's too awful!"

We stood opposite one another with the paper between us, and tried to think. In the lamplight the diamonds winked at us with what seemed human malice. I turned round and picked up the bag they had come from, looked vaguely into it, and shook it. A last stone fell out on the paper, quite a large one, and added itself to the pile.

"Why did she leave them here?" Daisy moaned on. "What did she bother us for? Why didn't she take them to Amelia herself?"

"Because she was afraid," I said, in the undertone of melodrama. "They're stolen, Daisy."

I had voiced the fear in both our hearts. We sat down opposite one another on either side of the table, with the newspaper full of diamonds between us. I don't know whether I was as pale as Daisy, but I felt quite as bad as she looked. And sitting thus, each staring into the other's scared face, we ran over the events of the evening:

We couldn't make much of it; it was too uncanny. But from the first we both decided we'd felt something to be wrong. Why or how they'd come? Who they were? What they wanted? We couldn't answer a single question. We were in a maze. The only thing that seemed certain was that they had one hundred and fifty diamonds of various sizes that they had wanted, for some reason, to get rid of, and they'd got rid of them to us. And so we talked and talked till, by slow degrees, we got to the point where suddenly, with a simultaneous start, we looked at one another, and breathed out:

"The Castlecourt diamonds!"

We had read it all in the papers, and we had talked it over, and here we were with a heap of stones in a newspaper that might be *the very stones*!

"And next year I'd hoped to know Lady Castlecourt. I'd been sure I would!" Daisy wailed. "And now——"

"But *you* haven't stolen the diamonds, dearest," I said soothingly. "You needn't get in a fever about that."

"But, Good Heavens, I might just as well! Do you suppose there's anyone in the world fool enough to believe the story of what happened here to-night? People say it's hard to believe everything in the Bible! Why, Jonah and the whale is simple and commonplace compared with it!"

It did look bad, and the more we talked of it the worse it looked. We didn't sleep

all night, and the dawn was coming through the blinds when we were still talking, trying to decide what to do. At breakfast we sat like two graven images, not eating a thing, and all that day in the office I found it impossible to concentrate my mind, but sat thinking of what on earth we'd do with those diamonds.

I'd suggested the first thing to go and give them up at the nearest police-station. But Daisy wouldn't hear of that. She said that no one would believe a word of our story—it was quite impossible. And when I came to think of it I must say I agreed with her.

I saw myself telling that story in a court of justice, and I realised that a look of conscious guilt would be painted on my face the whole time. I'd have felt, whether it was true or not, that nobody really ought to believe it, and as an honest, self-respecting citizen I ought not to expect them to.

Here we were, strangers that nobody knew a thing about, anyway. Daisy said they'd take us for accomplices; and when I said to her we'd be a pretty rank pair of accomplices to give up the swag without a struggle, she said they'd think we got scared, and decided to do what she calls "turn State's evidence."

She thought the best thing to do was to keep the stones till we could think up a more plausible story. We tried to do that, and the night after our meeting with Major and Mrs. Thatcher we stayed awake till three o'clock thinking up "plausible stories." We got a great collection of them, but it seemed impossible to get a good one without implicating somebody.

I invented a corker, but it cast a dark suspicion on Daisy, and she had an even better one, but it would have undoubtedly resulted in the arrest of Perkins and the housemaid, and possibly myself.

It was a horrible situation. Even if we could possibly have escaped suspicion ourselves, it would have ruined us socially and financially. Would the Colonial Box, Tub, and Cordage Company have retained as the head of its London branch a man who had got himself mixed up with a sensational diamond robbery? Certainly not! That concern demands a high standard and unspotted record in all its employees. I'd have got the sack at the end of the month.

And Daisy! How would the bishop and the two lords have felt about it? Have no more use for that little woman, you can bet your bottom dollar! Even

Lady Clara Gyves, who, they say, will go anywhere to get a good dinner, would have given her a chilling smile. I know them.

And I saw my Daisy sitting at home all alone on her reception day, and taking dinner with me every night. No, sir! That wouldn't happen if Cassius P. Kennedy had to take those diamonds to the Thames and throw them off London Bridge in a weighted bag.

So there we were! It was a dreadful predicament: Every morning we read the papers with our hearts thumping like hammers. Every ring at the bell made us jump, and we had a deadly fear that each time the portière was lifted and a caller appeared we'd see the buttons and helmet of a policeman with a warrant of arrest concealed upon his person.

I began to have awful dreams and Daisy didn't sleep at all, and got pale and pinched. We thought up more "plausible stories," but they seemed to get less probable every time, and all our spare moments together, which used to be so happy and care-free, were now dark and harassed as the meetings of conspirators.

Even concealing the miserable things was a wearing anxiety. First we decided to divide them, and Daisy wore her half in the chamois bag hung round her neck, while I concealed mine in a money-belt worn under my clothes.

We had about decided on that and I'd bought the belt, when we got the idea that if we were killed in an accident they'd be found on us, and then our memories would go down to posterity blackened with shame. So we just put them back in the bag and locked them up in Daisy's jewel-case, round which we hovered as they say a murderer does round the hiding-place of his victim.

I never knew before how burglars felt; but if it was anything like the way Daisy and I did, I wonder why anybody ever takes to that perilous trade. We were the most unhappy creatures in London, feeling ourselves a pair of thieves, and our unpolluted, innocent home no better than a "fence."

There was less in the papers about the Castlecourt diamond robbery, but that did not give us any peace; for, in the first place, we didn't know for certain that we had the Castlecourt diamonds, and, in the second, when we now and then did see dark allusions to the sleuths being "on a new and more promising scent," we modestly supposed that we might be the quarry to which it led.

Daisy began to talk of "going to prison" as a termination of her career that might not be so far distant, and to the thought of which she was growing reconciled.

This about covers the ground of my immediate connection with the stolen diamonds. Their subsequent disposition is a matter in which my wife is more concerned than I am. She also will be able to tell her part of the story with more literary frills than I can muster up. I'm no writing man, and all I've tried to do is to state my part of the affair briefly and clearly.

■ ■ ■

Statement of John Burns Gilsey, private detective, especially engaged on the Castle-court diamond robbery.

AT a quarter before eight o'clock, on the evening of May 4th, a telephone message was sent to Scotland Yard that a diamond necklace, the property of the Marquis of Castlecourt, had been stolen from Burrige's Hotel. Brison, one of the best of their men, was detailed upon the case, and three days later my services were engaged by the marquis.

After investigations which have occupied several weeks, I have become convinced that the case is an unusual and complicated one. The reasons which have led me to this conclusion I will now set down as briefly and clearly as possible.

As has already been stated in the papers, the diamonds, on the afternoon of the robbery, were standing in a leather jewel-case on the bureau in Lady Castlecourt's apartment. To this room access was obtained by three doors—that which led into Lord Castlecourt's room, that which led into the sitting-room, and that which led into the landing.

Lord Castlecourt's valet, James Chawlmers, and Lady Castlecourt's maid, Sophy Jeffers, had been occupied in this suite of apartments throughout the afternoon. At six o'clock Jeffers had laid out her ladyship's clothes, taken the diamonds from the metal dispatch-box in which they were usually carried, and set them on the bureau. She had then withdrawn into the sitting-room with Chawlmers, where they had remained for half-an-hour talking.

During this period of time Jeffers deposes that she heard the rustle of a skirt in the sitting-room, and went to the door to see if anyone had entered. No one was to be seen. She returned to the sitting-room,

and resumed her conversation with Chawlmers.

It is the general supposition—and it would appear to be the reasonable one—that the diamonds were taken then. According to Jeffers, they were in the case at six o'clock, and on the testimony of Lord and Lady Castlecourt they were gone at half-past seven. The person towards whom suspicion points is a housemaid, going by the name of Sara Wight, who had a pass-key to the apartment.

The suspicions of Sara Wight were strengthened by her actions. At half-past seven that evening she left the hotel without giving warning, and carrying no further luggage than a small portmanteau.

Upon examination of her room it was discovered that she had left her box, which contained a few articles of coarse under-clothing and a wadded cotton quilt. She had been uncommunicative with the other servants, but had had much conversation with Sophy Jeffers, who described her as a brisk, civil-spoken girl, whose manner of speech was above her station.

The natural suspicions evoked by her behaviour were intensified in the mind of Brison by the information that the celebrated thief, Laura the Lady, had returned to London. I myself had seen the woman at Earl's Court, and told Brison of the occurrence.

It had appeared to Brison that Jeffers' description of the housemaid had many points of resemblance with Laura the Lady. The theft reminded us both of the affair of the Comtesse de Chateaugay's rubies, when this particular thief, who speaks French as well as she does English, was supposed to have been the moving spirit in one of the most daring jewel robberies of our time.

Brison, confident that Sara Wight and Laura the Lady were one and the same, concentrated his powers in an effort to find her. He was successful to the extent of discovering a woman closely resembling Laura the Lady living quietly in a furnished flat in Knightsbridge with a man who passed as her husband. He discovered that this couple had left for a "business trip" on the Continent shortly before Sara Wight's appearance at Burrige's, and had returned shortly after her departure therefrom.

He regarded the pair and their movements as of sufficient importance to be watched, and for a week after their

return from the Continent had the flat shadowed.

One foggy night, while he himself was watching the place, the man and woman came out in evening dress, and took a hansom that was waiting for them. Brison followed them, and the fog being thick and their horse fresh, lost them in the maze of streets about Walworth Crescent.

He is positive that the occupants of the cab realised they were followed and attempted to escape. He assures me that he saw the driver turn several times and look at his hansom, and then lash his horse to a desperate speed.

One of the points in this nocturnal pursuit that he thinks most noteworthy is the manner in which the occupants of the cab disappeared. After keeping it well in sight for over half-an-hour, he lost it completely, and suddenly, in the short street that runs from Walworth Crescent north into Hanley Street; ten minutes later he is under the impression that he sighted it again near the Hyde Park Hotel. But if it was the same cab it was empty, and the driver was looking for fares.

For some hours after this Brison patrolled the streets in the neighbourhood, but could find no trace of the suspected pair. It was near midnight when he returned to his surveillance of the flat. The next morning he heard that its occupants had left. A search-warrant revealed the fact that they had gone with such haste that they had left many articles of dress, etc., behind them: There was every evidence of a hurried flight.

All this was so much clear proof, in Brison's opinion, of the guilt of Sara Wight: Upon this hypothesis he is working, and I have not disturbed his confidence in the integrity of his efforts.

The result of my investigations, which I have been quietly and systematically pursuing for the last three weeks, has led me to a different and much more sensational conclusion. That Sara Wight may have taken the diamonds I do not deny. But she was merely an accomplice in the hands of another. The real thief, in my opinion, is Gladys, Marchioness of Castlecourt.

My reasons for holding this theory are based upon observations taken at the time, by my large and varied experience in such cases, and by information that I have been collecting since the occurrence. Let me briefly state the result of my deductions and researches.

Lady Castlecourt, who was the daughter of a penniless Irish clergyman, was a young girl of great beauty brought up in the direst poverty. Her marriage with the Marquis of Castlecourt, which took place seven years ago this spring, lifted her into a position of social prominence and financial ease. Society made much of her; she became one of its most brilliant ornaments.

Her husband's infatuation was well known. During the first few years of their marriage he could refuse her nothing, and he stinted himself—for, though well off, Lord Castlecourt is by no means a millionaire peer—in order to satisfy her whims.

The lady very quickly developed great extravagances. She became known as one of the most expensively dressed women in London. It had been mentioned in certain Society journals that Lord Castlecourt's revenues had been so reduced by his wife's extravagance that he had been forced to let his town house in Grosvenor Gate, and for two seasons take rooms in Burridge's Hotel.

This is a simple statement of certain tendencies of the lady. Now let me state, with more detail, how these tendencies developed and to what they led.

I will admit here, before I go further, that my suspicions of Lady Castlecourt were aroused from the first. It was, perhaps, with a pre-disposed mind that I began those explorations into her life during the past five years which have convinced me that she was the moving spirit in this theft of the diamonds.

For the first two years of her married life Lady Castlecourt lived most of the time on the estate of Castlecourt Marsh Manor. During this period she became the mother of two sons, and it was after the birth of the second that she went to London and spent her first season there since her marriage. She was in splendid health, and even more beautiful than she had been in her girlhood. She became the fashion; no gathering was complete without her; her costumes were described in the papers; Royalty admired her.

I have discovered that at this time her husband gave her six hundred pounds per annum as a dress allowance. During the two first years of her married life she lived within this. But after that she exceeded it to the extent of hundreds, and finally thousands, of pounds.

The fifth year after her marriage she was in debt for three thousand pounds, her

creditors being dressmakers, furriers, jewelers, and milliners in London and Paris. She made no attempt to pay these debts; the tradesmen knowing her high social position and her husband's sterling honour, did not press her, and she went on spending with an unstinted hand.

It was last year that she finally precipitated the catastrophe by the purchase of a coat of Russian sable for the sum of one thousand pounds, and a set of turquoise ornaments valued at half that amount. Each of these purchases was made in Paris.

The two creditors, having been already warned of her disinclination to meet her obligations, had, it is said, laid wagers with other firms to which she was deeply in debt that they would extract the money from her within the year.

It was in the summer of the past year that Lady Castlecourt was first threatened by Bolkonsky, the furrier, with law proceedings. In the end of September she went to Paris and visited the man in his own offices, and I have it from an eyewitness that she exhibited the greatest trepidation and alarm, finally begging with tears for an extension of a month's time. To this Bolkonsky consented, warning her that, at the end of that time, if his account were not settled, he would acquaint his lordship with the situation and institute legal proceedings.

Before the month was up—that was in October of the past year—his account was paid in full by Lady Castlecourt herself. At the same time other accounts in Paris and London were entirely settled or compromised.

I find that during the months of October and November Lady Castlecourt paid off debts amounting to nearly four thousand pounds. In most instances she settled them personally, paying them in bank notes. A few claims were paid by cheque.

I have it from those with whom she transacted these monetary dealings that she seemed greatly relieved to be able to discharge her obligations, and that in all cases she requested silence on the subject as the price of her future patronage.

I now come to a feature of the case that I admit greatly puzzles me. Lady Castlecourt was still wearing the diamonds when this large sum was disbursed by her. As far as can be ascertained she had made no effort to sell them, and I can find no trace of a frustrated attempt to steal them. She had suddenly become possessed of four

thousand pounds without the aid of the diamonds. They were not called into requisition till nearly six months later:

The natural supposition would be that "someone"—an unknown donor—had lent her the four thousand pounds; in fact, that Lady Castlecourt had a lover, to whom, in a desperate extremity, she had appealed. But the most thorough examination of her past life reveals no hint of such a thing.

Frivolous and extravagant as she undoubtedly was, she seems to have been, as far as her personal conduct goes, a moral and virtuous lady. Her name has been associated with no man's, either in a foolish flirtation or a scandalous and compromising intrigue; in fact, her devotion to Lord Castlecourt appears to have been of an absolutely strong and sincere kind. While she did not scruple to deceive him as to her pecuniary dealings, she unquestionably seems to have been perfectly upright and honest in the matter of marital fidelity.

Where, then, did Lady Castlecourt secure this large sum of money? My reading of the situation is briefly this:

Her creditors becoming rebellious and Lady Castlecourt becoming terrified, she appealed to some woman friend for a loan. Who this is I have no idea, but among her large circle of acquaintances there are several ladies of sufficient means and sufficiently intimate with Lady Castlecourt to have been able to advance the required sum.

This was done, as I have shown already, in the month of October, when Lady Castlecourt was in Paris, where she at once began to pay off her debts. After this she continued wearing the diamonds, and, in my opinion, such is her shallowness and irresponsibility of character, forgot the obligations of the loan, which probably had been made under a promise of speedy repayment, either in full or in part.

It was then—this, let it be understood, is all surmise—that Lady Castlecourt's new and unknown debtor began to press for a repayment. There might be many reasons why this should have so closely followed the loan.

With a woman of Lady Castlecourt's lax and unbusiness-like methods, unusual conditions could be readily exacted. She is of the class of persons that, under a pressing need for money, would agree to any conditions and immediately forget them.

That she did agree to a speedy reimbursement I am positive; that once again

she found herself confronted by an angry and threatening creditor; and that, in desperation and with the assistance of Sara Wight, she stole the diamonds, intending probably to pawn them, is the conclusion to which my experience and investigations have led me.

How she came to select Sara Wight as an accomplice I am not qualified to state. In my opinion, fear of detection made her seek the aid of a confederate. Sara's flight, with its obviously suspicious surroundings, has an air of prearrangement suggestive of having been carefully planned to divert suspicion from the real criminal.

Sophy Jeffers assured me that Lady Castlecourt had never, to her knowledge, conversed at any length with the housemaid. But Jeffers is a very simple-minded person whom it would be an easy matter to deceive. That Sara Wight was her ladyship's accomplice I am positive; that she took the jewels and now has them is also my opinion.

Being convinced of her need of ready money, and of the rashness and lack of balance in her character, I have been expecting that Lady Castlecourt would make some decisive move in the way of selling the diamonds.

With this idea agents of mine have been on the watch, but without so far finding any evidence that she has attempted to place the stones on the market.

I am of the opinion that they are still in the hands of Sara Wight, who, whether she is an accomplished thief or not, is probably more wary and more versed in such dealings than Lady Castlecourt.

That her ladyship should have been the object of my suspicions from the start may seem peculiar to those to whom she only appears as a person of rank, wealth, and beauty.

Before the case came under my notice at all I had heard her uncontrolled extravagance remarked upon, and that alone, coupled with the fact that Lord Castlecourt is not a peer of vast wealth, and that the lady's moral character is said to be unblemished, would materially arouse the suspicions of one used to the vagaries and intricacies of the evolution of crime.

During my first interview with her ladyship I watched her closely, and was struck by her pallor, her impatience under questionings, her hardly concealed nervous-

ness, and her indignant repudiation of the suspicions cast upon her servants.

Her answers to many of my questions were vague and evasive, and to both Brison and myself, on two different occasions, she suggested the possibility of the jewels not being stolen at all, but having been "misaid." Even Brison, whose judgment had been warped by her beauty and rank, was forced to admit the strangeness of this remark.

The description given me by Sophy Jeffers of her ladyship's deportment when the theft was discovered still further strengthened my suspicions.

It is alleged by Jeffers—quite innocently of any intention to injure her mistress, to whom she appears devoted—that her ladyship's first emotion on discovering the loss was a fear of her husband; that when he entered the room she instinctively tried to conceal the empty jewel-case behind her, and that almost her first words to him were assurances that she had not been careless, but had guarded the jewels well.

Afterwards she attempted to be more reticent, and adopted an air of what almost appeared indifference, surprising not only myself and Brison but Jeffers by her remarks, made with irritated impatience, that they still might "turn up somewhere."

This change of attitude was even more convincing to me than her former exhibition of alarm. The very candour and childishness with which she showed her varying states of mind would have disarmed most people, but were to me almost conclusive proofs of her guilt.

She is a woman whose shallow irresponsibility of mind is even more unusual than her remarkable beauty. No one but an old and seasoned criminal, or a creature of extraordinary simplicity, could have behaved with so much audacity in such a situation.

Having arrived at these conclusions, I am now reduced to a passive attitude. I will wait and watch until such time as the diamonds are either pawned or sold. This may not occur for months, though I am inclined to think that her ladyship's need of money will force her to a recklessness which will be her undoing.

This brings my statement up-to-date. At the present writing I am simply awaiting developments, confident that the outcome will prove the verity of my original proposition.

[This story concludes next month, when Mrs. Kennedy and the Marchioness of Castlecourt give an account of their connection with the robbery. Their statements throw further light upon the mystery.]

A Long Lease.

By A. DEMAINE GRANGE.

Amateurs will find this little play particularly adapted to their requirements. Applications for permission to perform it in public must be made to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

PERSONS CONCERNED:

MONTAGU STAFFORD (a handsome, soldierly man of five-and-thirty, deeply bronzed by exposure to many suns).

KATE FAIRFAX (a tall, pretty girl of twenty-three, stylishly dressed in a winter costume).

SERVANT.

SCENE: A luxuriously furnished room in the Hotel Metropole, Folkestone. There are two doors, right and left; a row of windows, facing the sea, at the back; and a fireplace, in which a bright fire is burning, on the right. Arm-chairs, settees, a large round table, and various other articles of furniture, are disposed about the room. **MONTAGU STAFFORD** is discovered standing with his back to the fire, reading a letter. He finishes it, places it in his pocket, and then turns and warms his hands at the blaze.

MONTAGU: Hum—yes! It's uncommonly good of Arthur to take all this trouble about finding a house for me. Energetic chap, Arthur—and one of the best. Always willing to do anything like that to oblige a fellow, and thinks nothing of it. That's where he gets the start of his lazy, happy-go-lucky Ishmael of a brother. He does the thing while you wait; I wait until the thing gets done. (*Rousing himself with a laugh.*) Ah, well! I suppose five years grilling in the desert places of Eastern Africa takes the hustle out of a man. It also renders him peculiarly sensitive to temperatures of the cold-storage variety. Ugh! (*Shivers and draws an arm-chair up to the fire, sitting with his feet on the fender.*) Anyhow, it's very comforting to know that everything is settled, and I've nothing to do but sign the agreement when it arrives. That is the advantage of having a brother who knows what you want better than you do yourself. It saves a lot of time and worry—for you. (*Producing the letter and glancing over it.*) He seems to have done remarkably well, too. (*Reads.*) "A nice, roomy house, replete with every modern convenience, in close proximity to your favourite haunts—what more can you want?" What more, indeed! (*Turning a page.*) "The necessary document is now in course of preparation, and should reach you by an early post." (*Examining the envelope.*) 'Myes.

This just missed me in Paris three days ago, so I suppose the said document won't be long in turning up. (*Folds the letter and replaces it in his pocket.*) Well, that's all right! I've got a house suitable in every respect, in which to store my trophies of the chase, and live in ease and comfort—or, at any rate, in civilised respectability—for the rest of my natural life. What more can I want? Ah! (*Pauses abruptly; then continues in another tone.*) Six weeks ago, I should have said there was nothing more that I wanted; and now—well, I want Kate Fairfax. The notion first struck me when she came on board with her aunt that day at Port Said; it has been growing steadily during our somewhat protracted progress across Europe; and here in England it has assumed such dimensions that nothing else seems to be of any importance compared with it. Hence my dawdling on in Folkestone, when I ought to be in London making glad the heart of that devoted brother of mine. (*Suddenly starting to his feet.*) By Jove! that reminds me. I've forgotten to order a motor-car for this afternoon. That is important, because I mean to take advantage of our being alone to get the thing over—the proposal, I mean. I must see about it at once.

(*Hastens out through the door on the right.*
Some moments later, a **SERVANT** enters on the left, ushering in **KATE FAIRFAX**.)

SERVANT: If you will wait here, madam, I will ascertain if Mr. Stafford is in the hotel.

KATE (*moving down*): Thanks—do:

SERVANT: What name shall I say, madam?

KATE: Eh? Oh, say—a lady:

SERVANT: Yes, madam: (*Goes out on the right.*)

KATE: That doesn't commit one to anything. I mean, of course, it doesn't give one away before the servants: (*Laughing.*) Well, no—I don't exactly mean that, either! The fact is, I suppose I oughtn't to have come here at all. It might not be regarded as exactly the correct thing—er—under the circumstances. Oh, well—both the circumstances! (*Dropping into a chair by the table.*) I think it is most inconsiderate of uncle to wire that he is running down to Folkestone to-day, and expect me to stop at home all the afternoon and sign horrid documents and things, when I'd arranged to go motoring with Mr. Stafford! That is the worst of owning property—somebody is always wanting to hire it, or buy it, or something like that. And then a *wire* is so horribly *mean*. It gives you no chance of getting out of it: (*Vindictively.*) He might have known that I should be engaged this afternoon— (*Pauses abruptly, staring thoughtfully before her.*) Engaged this afternoon? Oh! That sounds rather—rather funny, when you think of it. Yes—it does sound odd—somehow.

(*Rises slowly and goes towards the fireplace as MONTAGU enters quickly on the left.*)

MONTAGU (*pausing, with a look of glad surprise*): Miss Fairfax!

KATE (*turning*): Oh, yes; I dropped in to tell you, Mr. Stafford, that I shall not be able to come this afternoon:

MONTAGU (*moving slowly down*): Not be able to come?

KATE: I'm afraid not: You see, my uncle has just sent a wire to say that he is running down from London by the two o'clock train, to transact some important business.

MONTAGU (*surprised*): With you?

KATE: Yes. It seems he has let some houses of mine, or sold them, or done something like that with them which necessitates my signing a lot of papers and what not, you know. (*As he stares at her blankly.*) Didn't I tell you I had property of my own?

MONTAGU (*dully*): No—you didn't: (*Turning away.*) I wish you had:

KATE (*in injured tones*): You don't believe it?

MONTAGU (*quickly*): I mean, I wish you had told me. (*Relapsing into gloom.*) It—it would have made a difference.

KATE (*with a little gasp*): Oh—would it? (*He nods dejectedly.*) It isn't very much, you know.

MONTAGU: The less the better—that is, the less difference it would have made. (*With a change of manner.*) But it is rather a curious thing that while you have been disposing of property I have been acquiring it.

KATE: Yes? (*Sits again by the table.*)

MONTAGU: Or to put it perhaps more accurately, my brother has been acquiring it for me.

KATE: Ah, you have succeeded in finding a house?

MONTAGU (*nodding*): Yes. A most desirable—er—bachelor residence, replete with every modern convenience, and in close proximity to—to all the principal attractions.

KATE (*judicially*): That sounds all right: But have you seen it?

MONTAGU: Not as yet: (*Sits on the opposite side of the table.*)

KATE: Ah—then I should wait until you do.

MONTAGU (*shrugging his shoulders*): That is the description I have of it.

KATE (*with a wise air*): Yes, I know: That is the description one invariably gets—on the board outside.

MONTAGU: But my brother—

KATE (*laughing*): Oh, of course, if your brother is satisfied, you *must* be. But why didn't you go and choose it for yourself?

MONTAGU (*with some embarrassment*): Oh, well, you see, I was—in point of fact, I hadn't the energy:

KATE: And you are a great hunter?

MONTAGU (*drily*): Not of houses.

KATE (*smiling*): Evidently not. (*There is a brief silence.*) Well, I hope you won't be disappointed:

MONTAGU (*abruptly*): So do I:

KATE (*hopefully*): Things may not turn out to be so bad, after all, you know:

MONTAGU: I trust not:

KATE: And it will be nice, after all your wanderings, to have a house of your own—a home—(*Pause.*)

MONTAGU (*rousing himself*): By Jove—yes! That is what I want—a home:

KATE: Replete with every modern convenience:

MONTAGU: And comfort.

KATE: And every modern comfort.

MONTAGU (*artfully*): Such as—as a wife, for instance.

KATE: Oh! (*Hastily*.) I don't think a modern wife would be much of a comfort.

MONTAGU (*rather hurt*): You surely do not suggest that an *ancient* one would be more suitable?

KATE: Oh, no! I don't suggest that.

MONTAGU: Let us say, then, one about—er—your age, Miss Fairfax.

KATE (*rising quickly*): Oh—now you are talking nonsense, Mr. Stafford.

MONTAGU (*springing up*): 'Pon my honour, no! I mean it, Kitty. (*Advances and takes her hand.*) I want you to share that—er—desirable—

KATE (*with a roguish glance*): Bachelor residence.

MONTAGU: Yes—no—of course not! What I mean is, I simply can't live without you, and—that's a fact!

KATE (*softly*): It would be a shame to let you die, Monty.

MONTAGU: Yes. (*Earnestly.*) You couldn't let me do that, Kitty, could you?

KATE (*shyly*): No, I don't think I could let you do—(*He suddenly takes her into his arms and kisses her*)—d—do that, Monty:

MONTAGU: My darling!

(*At this moment the door on the left is flung open, and the SERVANT enters bearing an imposing-looking long envelope.*

MONTAGU turns and glares at her fiercely.)

SERVANT (*meekly*): A letter for you, sir:

MONTAGU (*brusquely*): Thanks.

(*Takes the envelope and tears it open viciously. KATE moves slowly to the fireplace. The SERVANT withdraws. There is a short pause. Suddenly MONTAGU, who has been reading the document with a look of blank astonishment, utters a loud exclamation.*)

KATE (*turning quickly*): Whatever is the matter?

MONTAGU (*excitedly*): Matter! It's that confounded agreement! Here—read it. (*Holds the paper out towards her. She advances and takes it eagerly.*)

KATE (*reading rapidly, without stops*): "An agreement made this—day of—1906 between Kate Elizabeth Fairfax of The Grange Westholme in the county of Sussex Gentlewoman (hereinafter called the Landlord) of the one part and Montagu Haviland Stafford of Cairo Egypt Gentleman (hereinafter called the Tenant) of

the other part—" (*Looking up.*) Oh! (*Continuing.*) "The Landlord hereby agrees to let and the Tenant agrees to take all that messuage or tenement known as No. 140 Jermyn Street in the county of London together with the appurtenances thereto belonging for the term of Three Years from—" (*Pauses abruptly and stares at him in bewilderment.*)

MONTAGU (*frowning*): What on earth does it mean?

KATE (*sinking on to a chair*): Why—yes! (*Her eyes dilating.*) Monty! It means, of course, that your brother has actually been negotiating on your behalf for one of those houses of mine:

MONTAGU (*blankly*): The dickens he has!

KATE (*bursting into laughter*): Oh, Monty, isn't it just too delicious!

MONTAGU: Positively delirious!

KATE: I never thought a legal document could be so excruciatingly funny.

MONTAGU: Seems almost like a case of contempt of Court, doesn't it? (*She nods helplessly.*) But, I say—er—what are we going to do about it?

KATE (*demurely*): That is for you to decide, Monty.

MONTAGU: Pardon me, Kitty—it is your house.

KATE (*rising*): Very well, then, I think it is a pity that Uncle and your brother should have had all that trouble for nothing—

MONTAGU (*airily*): Never mind about them!

KATE (*reprovingly*): They did the best they could.

MONTAGU: Hum—yes. And it isn't so bad, after all.

KATE (*severely*): I happen to know that No. 140 is a very desirable residence, and—

MONTAGU: And fully comes up to the description on the board outside.

KATE (*loftily*): Of course. Therefore, I accept you as my tenant, and will let you have this house, rent-free, provided—(*Pauses and looks on the ground in some confusion.*)

MONTAGU: Provided—

KATE (*turning to him shyly*): That you take me as one of the appurtenances—

MONTAGU: Ah! (*Taking her hands—shyly.*) For three years—eh?

KATE (*her eyes meeting his*): For as long as you like, Monty.

MONTAGU: And that will be a long lease, Kitty—in fact, for always. (*Draws her to him and again kisses her.*)

— — — — —
CURTAIN.

The Westbeach Scandal.

By JAMES WORKMAN.

The strange story of a curate's strange behaviour.

A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER.

QUITE a sensation was caused among those who knew them when it was announced that the Rev. Matthew Lamb was engaged to Miss Dorothy Grigsby, of Moor Hall, Westbeach.

The Rev. Matthew was a model curate: He was small and slight, with delicate, refined features, and gentle, brown eyes. He had a natural gift of eloquence, and preached the most charming extempore sermons in a clear, musical voice. There was not a house in the parish in which he was not more than welcome. He was a non-smoker and a total abstainer. He took the most enthusiastic interest in the younger members of his flock, and they repaid him with almost embarrassing affection.

In short, the guileless and inoffensive little curate was a universal favourite: He was liked and respected even by those who were disposed to smile at what they considered his somewhat effeminate habits and almost childlike simplicity.

It goes without saying that Matthew was a source of considerable interest to the young ladies of the neighbourhood, though perhaps the interest waned a little when they were forced to the conclusion that he was too spiritual, too ethereal, too wholly absorbed in the duties of his sacred calling, to be attracted by the prettiest face or the sweetest smile.

No wonder they opened their eyes wide and held up astonished hands when the news of his engagement to Dorothy Grigsby was officially announced.

Dorothy was just the very last girl that anyone would have supposed likely to captivate him. In almost every respect she was the direct opposite of the shy and unobtrusive little curate. She was by no means studious or intellectual, and had a well-developed taste for the good things of this world. She was bubbling over with

life and energy, and cordially detested whatever she chose to consider "slow."

She was devoted to outdoor sports, cycled, rode, drove, motored, and played golf and tennis with untiring enthusiasm. She was an expert at billiards, and was acknowledged to be the best waltzer and amateur actress in the neighbourhood.

Her costumes were as the sands of the sea for multitude: Her father was a wealthy ship-owner, and his income allowed her to keep pace with all the latest fashions and to satisfy every caprice that entered her whimsical little brain.

She was continually flying off here, there, and everywhere, and grew restless if she were in the same locality for more than a few weeks. She was capricious, piquante, fascinating, and, as her feminine critics asserted, a consummate little flirt.

She had already been engaged, for very brief periods, to various young men of widely different types, and many believed that Matthew, like a new toy, attracted her by his novelty, by the very fact that he was such an extraordinary contrast to any of her previous fancies, and that she would very soon tire of him and throw him aside.

Others just as strenuously maintained that he was the first man who had ever really touched her heart, and that she was sincerely attached to him:

The rector, the Rev. George Osborne, was delighted when Dorothy's father, Grigsby, told him of the engagement:

"I'm extremely glad to hear it," he exclaimed. "She's just the very girl to make a man of him. She'll stir him up and pull him along, and it won't be her fault if he doesn't die a bishop. How did it come about? He's more pluck than I ever gave him credit for. I do assure you that I never was more surprised at anything in my life than when I heard that he had actually had the courage to propose to her."

"I'm not so sure that he had," replied

her father grimly. "Between ourselves, I've always understood that it was my daughter who proposed to him."

Osborne laughed outright, and was more than ever convinced of the almost infantile guilelessness of the meek and artless Matthew.

Then suddenly the model curate was presented in a new and unexpected light which amazed, bewildered, and horrified those who had hitherto believed themselves most intimately acquainted with him:

The curtain rose on this curious little drama when a letter from Dick Osborne, the rector's son, arrived at Moor Hall, addressed to Miss Edith Wilson: Edith was Dorothy's cousin, and was engaged to young Osborne, a briefless barrister, living in chambers in Gray's Inn, London:

There must surely be some truth in the theory that men and women are attracted by just precisely those qualities which are most conspicuously wanting in themselves. In the opinion of most people Edith would have made an ideal wife for the Rev. Matthew. Though quite as pretty as Dorothy, she was in all other respects a complete contrast to her more versatile cousin:

How did it come about that this quiet, serious, conscientious young woman, who should in the nature of things have been irresistibly attracted by the model curate, bestowed her whole affections on Dick, a graceless, feather-brained young rascal who was always just in or just out of a scrape, and who had been getting into hot water since the days of his earliest infancy? It was a puzzle to everyone who knew him:

Whatever the explanation may be, the fact remains that Edith was as much in love with this irrepressible young scapegrace as her volatile cousin Dorothy with the immaculate Matthew, and, though inclined to be severe in judging the escapades of others, could always find a thousand excuses for Dick:

The contents of the letter overwhelmed her with surprise and consternation, and she sat pale and silent, wondering whether it was her duty to put it in the fire or hand it to Dorothy. Judging from her expressions, Dorothy at once leapt to the conclusion that Dick was again in hot water.

Let me explain that trouble almost invariably ensued when the cousins indulged in a discussion upon the respective merits of their *fiancés*:

Though by no means easily ruffled,

Edith was exasperated beyond endurance by Dorothy's ceaseless harping upon the virtues of Matthew Lamb and the shortcomings of Dick. Almost unconsciously she was beginning to detest the little curate, who was always belauded as a paragon of perfection, while Dick was pointed out as an awful example to the young and innocent.

Things might have gone more smoothly if Dorothy could have refrained from somewhat ostentatiously expressing her sympathy with Edith—accompanied by the usual tribute to her own blameless *fiancé*—when ever Dick was inclined to be a little more frisky than usual.

As it was, Edith soured visibly at any reference to the shining virtues of the Rev. Matthew. On the present occasion Dorothy was quite as exasperating as usual:

"What's the matter, dear?" she asked sympathetically. "You look quite upset. I suppose Dick's been getting into trouble again. I think it's simply angelic of you to be so patient with him. I couldn't, I'm sure. Why, if Matthew were to——"

"Dick hasn't been getting into any trouble," interposed Edith sharply, "and you will do well to remember, Dorothy, that no one is absolutely perfect—not even Matthew. Whatever faults Dick may have he never attempts to conceal them: Can you say as much for Matthew? Most men do far worse things than Dick, but just because they take good care not to be found out, they are supposed to be models of all the virtues. Wait till you know Matthew a little better before you jump to the conclusion that he is quite as perfect as he seems. He may be found out, too, some day."

The idea of Matthew being found out struck Dorothy as being so exquisitely ludicrous that she burst out laughing.

"One never knows," she exclaimed: "Some day I daresay I shall catch him drinking too much ginger beer, or even—there's no telling—even smoking a cigarette: Don't I wish I could! Do you know what I should tell him if I did?"

"No, I don't," rejoined Edith testily:

"I should tell him he was as bad as Dick."

This was the last straw:

"You may tell him that at once, then," cried Edith angrily. "He is every bit as bad as Dick, and a good deal worse, for, whatever Dick is, he isn't a hypocrite."

She threw the letter across the table:

"When you have read that perhaps you will leave Dick alone in future."

Dorothy pounced on the letter, and read it with feverish eagerness. The following passage is the only one that concerns us :

"By the way," wrote Dick, "I've a spicy bit of news for you about Matthew Lamb. Could you believe that such a particularly pious individual, who looks as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, was really the most consummate little humbug out ? It's a positive fact. Why, every now and then the little hypocrite comes sneaking up to town, changes his clerical toggery for a loud, horsey, check suit, and goes in for high old jinks. Some fellows I know have seen him constantly loafing about the Empress Theatre—not merely attending the performance, you understand, but loitering about the stage-door. One of them swears he has met him several times behind the scenes. Looks rather fishy—doesn't it ? The immaculate Matthew is evidently as fond of kicking up his heels as anyone else when he gets outside his parish. You can use your own discretion about telling Dorothy, but I think someone should give her the tip."

Dorothy tossed the letter disdainfully back again.

"It's a silly hoax," she said angrily. "I don't believe a word of it."

"Do you mean," asked Edith, in an ominously quiet voice, "that you believe Dick capable of telling a deliberate falsehood ?"

"There are very few things I don't believe Dick capable of doing," retorted Dorothy, "and you are quite at liberty to tell him I said so."

The cousins were pretty evenly matched. If Dorothy could hit a trifle harder, Edith was the cooler of the two, and seldom missed when she did hit, whereas Dorothy was inclined to strike rather wildly when her blood was up.

Fortunately for the preservation of peace the door was flung open, and Mr. Grigsby, followed by his son Tom, and Jobson, the constable, came hurriedly into the room.

Grigsby was stout, and rather short-necked, with bristly hair, a red face, and somewhat prominent eyes. His expansive waistcoat was ornamented with an immense gold watch-chain, his boots creaked, he spoke in the loud, self-satisfied voice of a prosperous, pompous, self-made man. He looked flushed and excited, and was speaking when he entered the room.

"Pooh, pooh ! Stuff and nonsense !" he was exclaiming. "You've made some stupid blunder, Jobson. It's simply out of the question. I don't believe there's a word of truth in it."

Though Jobson was exceptionally tall, and abnormally stout, his stature was diminutive in comparison with his sense of personal dignity. He slowly turned his

somewhat dull and fishy eyes on Grigsby with a sour expression on his round, fat face.

"Oh, I don't mean that you are telling a deliberate untruth," snapped Grigsby, "and of course I'm obliged for your information, and all that kind of thing ! What I mean is that it's simply impossible. There must be some mistake."

"Whatever is the matter, father ?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, you're there, are you ? Now, look here. Have you heard, have you ever had the slightest suspicion, that Lamb is in the habit of paying clandestine visits to London in layman's clothes ?"

Dorothy almost gasped at this utterly unexpected question. Under ordinary circumstances she was noted for her quick wit and admirable self-possession ; but remembering Dick's odious letter she flushed crimson, hesitated, and remained speechless.

"What ?" exclaimed her father. "You have heard something about it, after all ?"

"I never heard one word about it until this morning," rejoined Dorothy fiercely, "and I am absolutely certain that the whole thing is nothing but a silly hoax."

"A hoax !" ejaculated Grigsby, with the expression of one who would be glad to discover the person who would have the audacity to hoax him. "I hardly think that possible, Dorothy, I should hardly suppose that likely. If it is a hoax, who is responsible for it ?"

"That letter," said Dorothy, pointing to the letter still lying on the table, "will show you very plainly who is responsible for it."

"It will do nothing of the sort," retorted Edith indignantly. "I believe it's perfectly true, every word of it. I'm sure Dick wrote it from the kindest possible motives, and you ought to be grateful to him instead of abusing him in this way. You had better read it, uncle, and judge for yourself."

Grigsby put on his gold-rimmed spectacles and glanced through it, flushing a deeper purple as he did so.

"This is serious," he said, "very serious, very serious indeed. I don't like the look of this."

"Ah, you'll come round to my opinion in the end," said Tom. "I always thought there was something a bit fishy about Lamb. He was always a trifle too sleek and meek and goody-goody for my taste. If you'd taken my advice——"

"Hold your tongue!" interrupted Grigsby. "Lamb may be able—I still hope, I sincerely trust, he may be able—to give a perfectly satisfactory account of what has taken place."

"But surely, father, you haven't the least doubt of it?" exclaimed Dorothy indignantly:

"Come, come, my dear child," rejoined her father impatiently, "no one is absolutely perfect: Up to the present I've certainly had a very high opinion of Lamb, but he's human, you know, he's human, and he may have been deceiving us, after all."

"Do you actually mean to say that you attach any importance to Dick's preposterous letter?" cried Dorothy.

"Dick's letter is merely what may be described as—ahem—corroborative evidence, and, taking into consideration what I've just heard from Jobson, is not quite so easily explained away as you suppose."

"Jobson!" exclaimed Dorothy: "What does Jobson know about it?"

"Well, miss," said the constable, "I've been keepin' my heye on the Rev. Lamb for some time, and I'm bound to say as, in my opinion, I shouldn't be far wrong in describin' the Rev. Lamb as a suspicious character—if you can understand me?"

"How dare you say such a thing?" cried Dorothy:

"Now, what's the use of going for Jobson?" interposed Tom: "If Lamb's a fraud, pitching into Jobson won't do any good: You only muddle the man, talking in that way. I'll get all you want out of him in half-a-minute: Now, look here, Jobson——"

"Will you hold your tongue?" cried Grigsby. "Do you think Jobson can't give his evidence without your assistance? Jobson, just repeat what you told me in the library."

"Well, it's like this," said Jobson: "I'm not prepared to say as the Rev. Lamb has done anythin' as you could describe as illegal or calculated to cause a breach of the peace—if you can understand me?"

"Of course we can understand you," exclaimed Grigsby testily: "Why don't you come to the point?"

The constable fixed his round, vacant eyes on Grigsby, gazed at him for a moment, and stolidly continued:

"What 'as led me to regard the Rev. Lamb as a suspicious character is the

followin' circumstances: The other night I was on my beat when a man slipped past me on the far side of the road: I could see at once as he was tryin' to avoid observation, and as it was past midnight I considered it my dooty to keep my heye on him: I follows him very quiet—if you can understand me?—and at last he comes to Rose Cottage, where the Rev. Lamb lodges: He tries the door, and then he begins prowlin' about the garden, examinin' the windows: He'd left the gate open, so I slips in without bein' heard, and gets up right close be'ind him:

"Just then he shoved the parlour window up, and was gettin' inside, when I grabs him by the leg, and flashes my lantern on him. You could have knocked me down with a feather when I found as it was the Rev. Lamb himself, dressed in a brown billycock 'at, and a light check suit!

"Well, if you'll believe me, he was as cool as a cucumber, and laughed at the idea of me takin' him for a burglar. He said he'd forgotten his latchkey. Then, as I was comin' away, 'Oh, Jobson,' says he, quite pleasant-like, 'I don't often keep late hours, and perhaps some of the good folks about here might be a little shocked to hear of me turning in at this time of night, so you'd better not say anything about it.' Then he slips a shillin' in my hand, and I come away."

"Well," said Dorothy hotly, "Mr. Lamb is not a baby. He may surely please himself what time he comes home, and whether he gets in at the window, or goes through the door. If he'd forgotten his latchkey that explains everything."

"It doesn't explain the check suit," remarked Tom, who was standing with his back to the fire smoking a cigarette, and thoroughly enjoying himself, "and it doesn't explain a few other little particulars which Jobson mentioned in the library: I don't profess to be immaculate myself, but when a man sets up to be a model like——"

"I do wish you'd be quiet," exclaimed Dorothy, exasperated by Tom's interference: "What business is it of yours?"

"It's as much my business as anybody's," rejoined Tom coolly: "In the first place, I lent the little beggar a five-pound note the other day, and I think it's highly improbable that I shall ever see that fiver again: In the second place, you're my sister, and the honour of the family's at stake, and I consider it my duty——"

"Stuff and nonsense," interposed his father angrily. "You're a conceited young ass, Tom. Just understand that you must either remain silent or leave the room. Go on, Jobson. You saw him several times after, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir, at the same place, and at the same time o' night, but not in the same toggery. He's always been in his own clothes since."

"Just so—exactly so," said Grigsby. "Now, listen to me, Dorothy—just listen to me, and try to be reasonable, my girl. Lamb is, of course, at liberty to return home at any time he pleases, but there are other circumstances which make this conduct of his peculiarly suspicious. Jobson has discovered that for some time past he has left his tradesmen's bills, and even his landlady's account unpaid. He's borrowed money from Tom, and I may tell you that not long ago he asked me to lend him twenty-five pounds, but being short of funds I was unable to do so."

"It'll be a lesson to me," said Tom, with the air of one who has received another proof of the base depravity of human nature.

"It's most cruel and unjust of you to talk in this way," exclaimed Dorothy. "If Matthew were here you wouldn't dare to say such things. I'm perfectly certain that he can explain everything, and it's very mean and cowardly to slander him behind his back."

"I cannot permit you to speak in that way, Dorothy. It is most disrespectful. I really cannot permit it," rejoined her father. "Lamb shall have every opportunity of giving an explanation. I hope it will be a satisfactory one—I sincerely hope so. At the same time I confess that I am not very sanguine. However, we shall soon see. I shall go to his lodgings with Jobson here at once, and get to know the truth one way or the other."

"I have not the least doubt that you will get to know the truth," retorted Dorothy, "and the truth is that there is not the very slightest foundation for these utterly absurd accusations."

"We shall see about that," replied her father grimly. "Come along, Jobson."

"If you care to leave the matter in my hands," said Tom. "I'll undertake to put it through for you. As I have a personal interest in—"

"Pooh, pooh," exclaimed Grigsby; "have you the assurance to suppose that I'd leave

a matter like this in *your* hands? If you wish to come you may do so, but only on condition that you keep that meddling tongue of yours quiet, and don't speak until you're spoken to."

As Grigsby left the room Tom shrugged his shoulders, and regarded his parent with a pitying smile. Nevertheless, he followed him with deliberate and dignified steps.

"The gov'nor has no diplomacy," he murmured to himself; "loses his temper, and all that sort of thing. He'd much better have left the matter in my hands."

■ ■ ■

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

AS Grigsby, Tom, and Jobson emerged from the drive on their way to the curate's lodgings they encountered the rector, a genial country parson. Grigsby, who was utterly incapable of exercising even temporary reserve with regard to such a topic, immediately explained the situation to him. The rector was hilariously sceptical.

"Matthew Lamb a suspicious character!" he exclaimed. "Out of the question, my dear sir, utterly impossible, I assure you. I've had to do with a lot of men in my time, and I do assure you I never met anyone who was so absolutely innocent and unsophisticated, so guileless and blameless, so entirely ignorant of evil, as our little friend Matthew. There must be some mistake, or else the whole thing's an elaborate hoax. That son of mine, that young rascal of a Dick, has been up to all sorts of pranks since the first day he could walk, and Jobson"—Jobson was plodding stolidly in the rear—"is admittedly the greatest ass in the Force. The idea of poor, innocent Lamb being a suspicious character is really too delicious. Take my word for it, my dear sir, it's either a blunder or a hoax, possibly both."

Grigsby was somewhat staggered by the rector's scepticism, but he shook his head.

"We'll hope so," he said dubiously. "I should be only too delighted if it were so. You may be sure that I don't want any scandal or unpleasantness, for my daughter's sake as well as my own. Between ourselves, though I gave in for the sake of peace when Dorothy seemed to have set her heart on him, Lamb was never altogether to my taste. I never met a human angel yet, and the man who poses as one is generally

capable of cutting some very queer capers on the sly."

"With the exception of Matthew Lamb," said the smiling rector.

They passed along the village street until they arrived at Lamb's modest lodgings. The landlady, primly dressed, somewhat elderly, and eminently respectable, opened the door herself. She looked pale and flustered.

"Is Mr. Lamb in?" asked Grigsby.

"No, sir. He's just gone out."

"Any idea when he'll be back?"

"No, sir. He didn't know himself."

"Ah, I suppose that means that you won't see him again till to-morrow morning—eh?"

The landlady winced perceptibly, and glanced with nervous apprehension at Jobson, who was standing majestically in the rear. A few loafers, scenting scandal afar off, were gradually drawing nearer.

"You can move on, Jobson," said Grigsby, "but don't go far away. And mind, not a word about this until I see you again."

"Very good, sir," replied Jobson. "The Rev. Lamb is out, I suppose, sir?"

"Yes, he is."

"Just so, sir. I should have been surprised to 'ear as the Rev. Lamb was in, sir."

The rector's eyes twinkled merrily.

"You should have been a detective, Jobson," said he.

"I've often thought so myself, sir," replied Jobson.

"Well, there's no saying what you may come to yet," chuckled the rector. "In the meantime, you'd better move on, my good fellow, or we shall have half the village here in five minutes. We'll step inside, Mrs. Perry, and have a word with you."

The landlady ushered them into Lamb's sitting-room.

"Now then," said Grigsby, "if you've anything to say, let us hear it, Mrs. Perry."

"Oh, gentlemen, I'm more put out than you can imagine," exclaimed the poor woman tearfully. "A quieter, pleasanter-spoken young gentleman I never had in this 'ouse, nor one who paid his bills more regular up to a few weeks ago. And now, just look here, gentlemen."

She produced a handful of unpaid bills, and passed them to the still smiling rector. As he glanced at them one by one the smile died away, and his expression grew more and more serious. A rapid calculation convinced him that the curate's liabilities

were altogether out of proportion to his modest stipend.

"Well?" asked Grigsby impatiently.

The rector handed him the bills.

"They prove clearly enough," he said gravely, "that Lamb has been imprudent; but what young man isn't imprudent at times? Dick, for instance, has been up to his ears in debt over and over again, and Tom, too, I suspect. I really think you needn't distress yourself, Mrs. Perry. You may have to wait a little, but I'm quite certain you'll get your money in the end."

"Oh, it isn't only the money, sir!" rejoined the landlady dolefully. "There's other things besides. Why, the hours he keeps is perfectly scandalous, and him a clergyman, too. I don't know what to do about it, I'm sure I don't."

The rector's face flushed, and he moved uneasily in his chair. Grigsby breathed audibly through his nose, and regarded the nervous landlady with fierce, protruding eyes. Tom whistled softly to himself.

"But I haven't told you the worst," continued Mrs. Perry, opening a desk that stood on the table, and extracting a large envelope. "Mr. Lamb went off in a plunge and left this lying about. You know what a woman is. I could no more help looking at it than I could help eating or drinkin', though I do wish to goodness I hadn't, that I do. I hope as I'm doin' no harm in showin' it to you, but a woman does feel as if she ought to have someone to advise her, and I'm at my wits' end."

She offered the envelope to the rector, who hesitated for a moment, but finally waved it aside.

"No, no," he said, "it's a private letter. We shouldn't be justified in reading it."

Grigsby was troubled by no such fine scruples. He almost snatched it from Mrs. Perry's hands, and dragged out the contents: They consisted of a photograph, and a short note in feminine handwriting on pink, scented paper. It was the photograph of a very pretty and popular young actress, dressed like a girl of fifteen in short skirts and a pinafore, and her signature was scribbled at the foot of the card. In a voice quivering with indignation Grigsby read the note aloud:

Empress Theatre.

MY DEAR OLD CHAP,—

I inclose photograph, as I promised, but I can't let you off coming to town to-morrow. I'm dying to see you. I've thought of a much easier plan of getting my husband out of the way than the one you suggested, and I want your opinion about it.

If you don't come I'll never forgive you. Even if you have to run the risk of being found out, you must come.

Ever yours affectionately,

DAISY HAWTHORNE.

The silence that followed was more eloquent than words. Even Tom was struck dumb with astonishment. Grigsby and the rector gazed at each other in speechless bewilderment.

"It's simply awful," whimpered Mrs. Perry at last. "I do assure you there's hardly a day passes but he gets a letter in the same 'andwriting, and him a clergyman, too."

"A clergyman!" exclaimed the rector indignantly. "I shall take precious good care he shan't be a clergyman in this parish much longer."

"Oh, dear me!" wailed Mrs. Perry: "I thought I should be doin' mischief by showin' you that letter, and now I've done it. Oh, gentlemen, I'm a poor woman, and——"

"Now, that'll do; that's quite enough of that sort of thing," interrupted Grigsby savagely. He was always inclined to be a trifle coarse-fibred when he got excited, or lost his temper. "That letter's worth its weight in gold to me, and every penny Lamb owes you shall be paid as soon as we get rid of him, and that'll be before this time to-morrow, or I'll know the reason why."

He turned to the rector.

"I suppose you're satisfied now, Osborne? I suppose you'll admit now that this model curate of yours is simply a consummate humbug and hypocrite?"

"I'm afraid there's no longer any possible room for doubt," rejoined the rector. "I have never been the victim of such a gross deception in the whole course of my life, and I assure you that if the fellow escapes too easily it shall be through no fault of mine."

"Very well. Now attend to me, Mrs. Perry. The moment Lamb returns—no matter at what time—tell him I want particularly to see him on a matter of the utmost importance. Don't tell him we've been here, but just repeat what I've said. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," whimpered the landlady, with her apron to her eyes.

Grigsby put the bundle of bills, and the letter and the photograph, into his pocket, and marched out, followed by the rector and Tom. A little beyond the village they met Jobson.

"Well," inquired Jobson, "he didn't turn up, I suppose?"

"No," snapped Grigsby, "he didn't."

"Just so, sir. Well, my opinion is as he never will do. He's a deep one, he is. You've seen the last of him. Take my word for it, sir, you'll never set eyes on him again."

"Do you really think so?" asked the rector nervously.

"That I do, sir. I haven't no doubt about it, sir."

"This is more serious than ever, Grigsby," said the rector. "You see, the fellow has charge of various funds, including a large sum which, as you know, has just been subscribed for a new organ. If he really has bolted it's not likely he's left a penny behind him."

"He's not the man I take him for if he has," said Jobson.

"Then we'd better apply for a warrant at once!" exclaimed Grigsby.

But the rector was inclined to temporise:

"It's a most awkward situation," he said: "It will be infinitely better for everybody concerned if we can manage the affair without creating a scandal. You naturally don't want one, and I'm sure I don't. Besides, Jobson may be wrong, after all. It's more than likely that Lamb will return if we keep quiet, but if we make a noise he may get wind of it and slip through our fingers. Besides, I don't suppose that any magistrate would issue a warrant. We've no positive proof that Lamb has done anything illegal."

"But what do you propose to do?" asked Grigsby. "As soon as he returns he's sure to discover that we've found him out, and unless we keep a pretty smart watch he'll be off before we know where we are."

"If it weren't for the money, that might, after all, be the best solution of the problem," rejoined the rector. "As it is, we must get hold of him somehow or other, and of course if he's actually made away with it he must take the consequences, scandal or no scandal."

"Well, now I've got a proposal to make," said Tom. "Jobson can hang about, and keep his eyes open, and if Lamb turns up he can insist on escorting him to the Hall. I'll take the first train to London. I'll go to this theatre, try to discover where the fellow is, and what he's after, and act as I think best under the circumstances. I can give him in charge, or threaten to do so unless he returns home, or simply keep my eye on him."

Jobson smiled the superior smile of a

professional listening to an unsophisticated amateur.

"If he's the man I take him to be—and he's a deep one, he is, or my name's not Jobson—he'll give you the slip as easy as look at you."

"Jobson's quite right," exclaimed Grigsby. "It's out of the question. What does a youngster like you know about such things? You'll only make a mess of it, and put him on his guard. What do you say, Osborne?"

"Well, I don't know," rejoined the rector. "I'm rather inclined to favour Tom's plan. It's not by any means perfect, but I don't see what else we're to do. We don't want to frighten him away, and yet it's necessary to keep him in sight. I should let Tom go."

"Very well. You hear, Tom? Be off with you."

Tom glanced at his watch, saw that he had just time to catch the next train, and hurried away in high spirits. The rector turned to Jobson.

"Now, don't forget to keep a sharp look-out, Jobson."

"And don't forget to keep your mouth shut, too, Jobson," added Grigsby, "especially if you see any of those newspaper fellows about. If you bring Lamb quietly to the Hall without attracting attention I'll—well, I'll see that you don't lose by it."

An unusually intelligent expression gleamed in the constable's eyes as he saluted and moved away.

"Well, I must be going," said the rector.

"No, for goodness' sake, don't go!" pleaded Grigsby. "Come back to the Hall with me. I shall have to explain the situation to Dorothy, and—well—well, I expect there'll be a scene—if you can understand me—as Jobson says."

"Oh, yes, I understand well enough," replied the rector. "You forget that I've daughters of my own. Well, I'll come and see you through it, though I don't half like the business, I can tell you."

"That's very good of you," said Grigsby gratefully. "We'll see her at once, and have done with it, and then we can cool down over a cigar and a glass of wine. I do hope the girl will be reasonable."

"She'll be very different from the average girl if she is," rejoined the rector, and the two stout, middle-aged men walked towards the Hall with the air of a couple of school-boys invited to a private interview by the headmaster.

AN INCREDIBLE CHARGE.

AT the end of a prolonged interview with Dorothy, the Rev. George Osborne, M.A., and Josiah Grigsby, M.P., beat an ignominious retreat to the library and sank into easy-chairs with a sigh of relief. As they puffed their cigars the rector, in spite of a slight feeling of soreness, could not help smiling.

"It's simply incomprehensible," he said, "the implicit belief that a woman always has in the man she loves. There's Dorothy, for instance. Why, you might as well talk to a stone wall. She simply scoffs at evidence upon which any intelligent jury would convict an archangel. Logic and commonsense are thrown away on her: She's an obstinate, wilful, unreasonable little fool, and the most absurd part of the whole thing is that I admire her for it."

"She's torn poor Dick's character to shreds. She's simply made mincemeat of Jobson—who certainly is an ass. She's described Mrs. Perry as a wicked, malicious, unscrupulous old woman. She's pitched into you. She's pitched into me. She's pitched into Tom and Edith. She's accused us of doing all sorts of unjust and ungentlemanly things, and yet here am I, a sane, practical, middle-aged man, absolutely admiring her for what I know to be the purest folly. Grigsby, that girl of yours has grit in her. She would have made that little sneak of a Matthew a magnificent wife."

Grigsby merely grunted. He was still smarting in sensitive spots, and in no mood to respond to the rector's enthusiasm.

"It's quite evident," continued the rector, "that unless she hears a confession from the man's own lips she'll never believe a word against him."

"Tell me frankly, Osborne," said Grigsby, "do you consider it within the bounds of possibility that Lamb can explain away these suspicious circumstances?"

"I don't, indeed," rejoined the rector, "I don't, indeed. To tell you the truth, I think that all of us would be placed in a most uncomfortable position if he did: It isn't quite usual, you know, to examine a man's private correspondence, and employ another man to follow him about like a kind of amateur detective. If in some unforeseen and entirely incomprehensible way Lamb should come out of this affair with credit, I, for one, should feel that I was placed in a most awkward and embarrassing position. However, it's no use discussing that. There can be no doubt that the

fellow's guilty. No possible shadow of a doubt."

"It's a most unfortunate business, this infatuation of Dorothy's," said Grigsby. "She's just the kind of girl to stick to him even if he is proved guilty."

"Yes," said the rector with emphasis, "she is."

"I shouldn't have minded it so much," groaned Grigsby, "I shouldn't have thought nearly so much of it if he hadn't been a clergyman, and posed as such an absolute model of perfection. People will consider him infinitely worse than if they hadn't believed him to be exceptionally pious."

"It's human nature," said the rector: "I feel the inclination myself. I shall keep a particularly sharp eye on the next model curate I meet with, though I never did, and I don't believe I ever shall, meet with anyone quite so ideally perfect as Matthew Lamb has always appeared to be."

Grigsby was restless and excited. He kept rising and looking out of the window, sitting down and getting up again, pacing about the room, and consulting his watch:

"I wish Tom were back again," he groaned, "or we could hear something from Jobson. I can't stand this suspense."

"Come, come," said the rector soothingly: "Sit down and finish your cigar like a sensible man: Things may turn out better than you expect. Dorothy may throw the fellow overboard, after all."

"I wish to Heaven she would!" exclaimed Grigsby fervently: "Look here, Osborne, I wish you'd go and have a talk with her. Put it to her plainly: Show her it's her duty, and all that sort of thing, and——"

"No thank you," said the rector decidedly: "Just at present I don't feel equal to another interview with your charming daughter. The last afforded me quite enough excitement for one day: We had better wait until Tom or Jobson turns up, and I don't expect either of them until after midnight."

The rector's prediction was verified: The clock had struck twelve before Tom arrived. The servants had all been sent to bed, but the family still sat waiting in the dining-room, where a round of cold beef and other substantial eatables had been placed for Tom's refreshment.

In spite of her father's expostulations Dorothy had insisted on being present: There had consequently been a lively and not very edifying scene until the rector

interposed, and blandly suggested a compromise.

Dorothy was allowed to remain on condition that she continued absolutely silent until the investigation was over: She had patched up a truce with Edith, who consented to remain with her. When Tom arrived by himself she remarked emphatically:

"I wish it to be distinctly understood that, whatever Tom or anyone else may say, I shan't believe one word of these ridiculous charges against Matthew."

"If you speak another word," exclaimed Grigsby, "I shall not allow you——"

"My dear sir," interposed the rector, "I'll answer for Dorothy not interfering: Indeed, I'm quite sure that her respect for your wishes will prevent her doing so: Anything fresh, Tom?"

All eyes were fixed on Tom, who was already moving in the direction of the cold beef.

"Rather," said Tom. "I may say at once that I've crossed off that five pounds as a bad debt. It'll be a lesson to me I shan't forget in a hurry."

"What do you mean?" cried Grigsby: "Has the fellow got away? Has he given us the slip?"

"No, he hasn't," rejoined Tom, "for the simple reason that it isn't in his power to do so."

"What do you mean? Where is he?"

"Where is he? He's in gaol—that's where he is."

If Tom was anxious to produce a sensation he had every reason to be satisfied. For several seconds his bewildered audience sat dumb and motionless:

"In gaol?" gasped Grigsby at length: "On what charge?"

"Charged with being drunk and disorderly and assaulting the police."

The grotesque absurdity of such a charge being brought against the inoffensive little curate, a member of the Blue Ribbon Army, and conspicuous for his phenomenal meekness of spirit, would, under any other circumstances, have appeared intensely ludicrous, but not a smile crossed the faces of Tom's audience. The rector was the first to recover.

"It seems next door to impossible," he said. "Are you certain of it?"

"Absolutely certain," rejoined Tom: He produced a visiting card, and handed it to the rector:

"I got that from one of the policemen who ran him in."

"The Rev. Matthew Lamb," groaned the rector, glancing at the card. "That settles it. How did you get this?"

"Well, it was this way," replied Tom, slicing vigorously at the cold beef. "I hung about the Empress for hours, but couldn't get on his track, though I tipped the doorkeepers, and pumped them as dry as a bone. I thought he'd given me the slip, and if I'd been like most fellows I know I'd have chucked the thing up and come home again. But that's not my style. When I take a thing in hand I generally manage to do it somehow or other, and I managed to do it this time. I thought he might be at the evening performance, and of course I turned in, but there wasn't a sign of him:

"Well, things didn't look very promising, but I kept my wits about me, and after the performance I slipped out, and made for the stage-door, and there was the little beggar himself, got up in a style that would have set your teeth on edge—gay isn't the word for it. But that wasn't the best of the joke. What do you think he was doing?"

"Heaven only knows!" groaned the rector.

"Why, helping Daisy Hawthorne, the very girl who wrote that letter—one of the prettiest girls I ever set eyes on—into a hansom. It's a solemn fact, by Jove! I didn't think the little beggar had it in him. I struggled towards him through the crowd, but he was gone before I could get near him. I was after him like a shot, but it was no go. The fellow was as slippery as an eel. I never caught more than a glimpse or two of him a long way ahead, and finally he disappeared altogether.

"I wasted a lot of time hunting about for him, but finally I had to give it up, and drive to Euston to catch the last train. When I got there I found I'd a few minutes to spare, and as I couldn't see him in the station I stepped outside. There was a policeman strolling about, and I asked him if he'd seen a clergyman go by. The man grinned all over.

"Well, that's queer," said he. "Why, we've just had to run a parson in for being drunk and disorderly, and assaulting the police."

"I was on the track at once:

"You didn't get to know his name, I suppose?" I asked.

"Oh, didn't I?" said he. "He'd a

fist full of visiting cards and he was giving them away right and left. It was the funniest thing you ever see. After the row was over he wanted to shake hands all round, and he gave us each a card, and said he was 'appy to make our acquaintance, and 'oped we'd look him up, and all that sort of tommy-rot. That's the card as he gave me, sir. You can stick to it if you like. I don't want it."

"When I saw that it was Lamb's card, of course I did stick to it, and after tipping the bobby I had just time to jump into the train as it was moving out of the station, and here I am."

The clattering of Tom's knife and fork was obtrusively audible in the embarrassing silence that ensued. For the first time even Dorothy's indomitable spirit gave way: She made a brave effort to preserve the defiant expression with which she had hitherto listened to Tom's narrative, but the attempt was in vain. With a pitiful twitching of the lips her head sank on Edith's shoulder, and, in spite of her struggles to repress them, the tears began to trickle through her fingers.

"I hope you're satisfied now," said her father harshly.

Dorothy jumped to her feet, and confronted him with a courage that under the circumstances was little short of heroic.

"No, I'm not satisfied," she exclaimed. "I know him better than anyone else can possibly do, and I know that he's utterly incapable of such conduct. If he were here I'm quite certain he could explain everything."

"What's the use of talking such ridiculous nonsense?" cried her father angrily. "Explain everything, indeed! You know perfectly well that he might as well try to fly over the moon. I appeal to you, Osborne—is there the slightest chance, is there the remotest possibility that if the fellow were sitting in that chair opposite to me he could explain what has taken place in a way that would satisfy anyone outside a lunatic asylum?"

"It would be little short of a miracle if he did," rejoined the rector emphatically: "I have no more doubt in my own mind that he is guilty than I have that the earth moves round the sun."

"I think what I have just told you ought to settle that question," said Tom.

"Well," continued the rector, "nothing more can be done to-night. I shall run up to town first thing in the morning, and try

to arrange this most unfortunate business as quietly as possible. I suppose you are quite certain, Tom, that there is no chance of Lamb turning up here to-night?"

"Not the slightest," replied Tom. "The policeman told me——"

"Hush!" exclaimed his father.

In the silence that followed steps could be heard approaching along the drive, accompanied by the murmur of voices. The company held their breath and listened. Then suddenly they started, and glanced at each other in astonishment. The voices were those of Jobson and the erring curate.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Tom, jumping up and rushing to the door. "The fellow's here, after all. He must have been let out on bail."

In another moment he ushered in the ponderous constable and the Rev. Matthew Lamb. Jobson's fat face wore a smirk of triumph, and he kept close to the curate's elbow, ready to pounce upon him if he showed the slightest desire to escape.

The Rev. Matthew carried a brown billycock in his hand, and wore a loud check suit, an up-to-date layman's collar, and a somewhat obtrusive scarf, ornamented with a horse-shoe pin. Yet he showed no trace of embarrassment. His gentle brown eyes twinkled pleasantly, his mild and pensive countenance wore its usual friendly smile. He was the first to break the awkward silence that followed his entrance.

"I may say," he remarked in his blandest tones, "that I should never have dreamt of calling on you at this unseasonable hour, Mr. Grigsby, and in this somewhat unconventional dress, if Jobson had not been kind enough to inform me that you particularly wished to see me. In any case I should have stopped to change my clothes if he had not insisted—no doubt from the best of motives—that I should accompany him here at once. I hope you are going to allow me the privilege of being of service to you in some way or other."

Mr. Grigsby, his short, bristly hair erect, his prominent eyes glaring through his gold spectacles, spluttered with indignation.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "I wonder you have the assurance to look me in the face."

"I fear," rejoined Lamb, with the corner of his eye lingering tenderly on the cold beef, "I'm afraid, Mr. Grigsby—it is no doubt entirely my own fault—that I don't quite follow you."

The curate's mild tones exasperated Grigsby beyond endurance.

"Don't you?" he exclaimed, purple with indignation. "Well, just listen to me and I'll soon make the situation clear enough: I tell you plainly that I never thought a great deal of you. There was a little too much of the tame cat about you for my taste. Still, I put up with you. You can't say that I didn't put up with you and make you welcome. Well, what was the end of it? Though you practically hadn't a penny piece in your pocket you proposed to my daughter."

The eyes of the Rev. Matthew twinkled and grew solemn again, the rector coughed slightly, Dorothy flushed, her father hurried on:

"I reluctantly gave my consent to your engagement, considering you a milksop, but never dreaming that you were a hypocrite. If I'd known as much of you as I do now I'd have turned you neck and crop out of the house; and you may take my word for it that when you go out of that door this night you'll never enter it again."

Grigsby stopped for breath. Lamb turned to the rector.

"Mr. Grigsby," he said blandly, "seems to be labouring under some misapprehension which prevents him speaking with his usual perspicuity, and, I may add—without wishing to be in the least offensive—his usual courtesy. Perhaps you will kindly inform me whether—quite unintentionally, of course—I have been so unfortunate as to give him any just cause of offence."

"I can only say," rejoined the rector with severity, "that though Mr. Grigsby, in the heat of the moment, has expressed himself somewhat forcibly, the circumstances, in my opinion, justify every word he has uttered. So far as I am concerned, I cannot find words to express my grief, and pain, and amazement."

"And you a clergyman, too!" murmured Tom.

"I am quite unconscious," said the Rev. Matthew calmly, "of having done anything whatever—allowing for the frailty of human nature—which might be considered indefensible from a moral or even a religious point of view."

The elder men glared at him in speechless indignation. Jobson bestowed on him a glance of puzzled admiration, muttering to himself: "He's a deep one, he is."

Tom began to regard the curate with something very like respect mingled with envy. He could play tolerably wild pranks himself, but when found out he had never

been able to meet his accusers with such consummate self-assurance.

Edith—so indulgent to Dick's unedifying capers—gazed at the erring clergyman, a character peculiarly sacred in her eyes, with horrified disapproval. Even Dorothy—shocked at the curate's singularly inappropriate costume—had a bewildered, half-frightened expression.

"If you will be good enough," continued Lamb placidly, "to point out anything in my conduct of which you disapprove—you will pardon my suggesting that you have not done so yet—I really have not the least doubt that I shall be able to explain everything to your entire satisfaction."

This was really too audacious. Tom whistled. Jobson gave a hoarse chuckle, and then tried to look preternaturally grave.

Grigsby was inarticulate with wrath. He turned his crimson face to the rector, and appointed him counsel for the prosecution with a wave of the hand. The rector rose, and resting his fingers on the table in the attitude he assumed when occupying the chair at lectures and entertainments, cleared his throat, and proceeded to address the court.

■ ■ ■

THE MYSTERY IS SOLVED.

"I FEEL confident, Mr. Grigsby," said the rector suavely, as he opened the case for the prosecution, "I feel confident that you wish the charges which have been brought against Mr. Lamb to be investigated in the most thorough and systematic and yet at the same time impartial manner. Am I justified in believing that to be your wish?"

"Yes, yes," rejoined Grigsby irritably. "Go on, go on."

"Very well," continued the rector, "then we will take these charges in their proper order. In the first place—"

"Excuse me one moment," interposed the Rev. Matthew, glancing wistfully at Tom, who was punishing the cold beef and pickles. "May I say that with the exception of a buttered roll and a cup of tea I have had absolutely nothing to eat since one o'clock. Would there be any objection to my taking some slight refreshment while I listen to your no doubt extremely interesting remarks?"

In the eyes of Tom and Jobson Matthew reached the zenith of his glory by what appeared to them the cool impudence of this suggestion.

"No," exclaimed Grigsby emphatically, "you don't break bread in my house again—you may understand that at once."

"I think that under the circumstances it would be unseemly," said the rector, "unseemly, to say the least of it. Sit down: Let us proceed. In the first place, it appears that you have incurred liabilities that you are quite unable to meet."

"Including a loan of five pounds from me," interposed Tom.

"In other words," continued the rector, "you are head over ears in debt. This bundle of unpaid bills would be accepted as evidence in any court of justice. That is the first charge against you—can you refute it?"

All eyes were turned on the curate. Everyone was anxious to know what ingenious explanations he could evolve. Tom and Jobson expected him to surpass himself.

"The amount, I think," said Matthew, putting on his *pince-nez*, "is—is—"

"Seventy-seven pounds three shillings and ninepence-halfpenny," rejoined the rector severely.

Lamb produced a pocket-book, opened it deliberately, and extracted a bundle of crisp bank-notes. They crackled delightfully as he counted them.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—eight tens are eighty," he remarked, and handed eight rustling ten-pound notes to the rector. "I think that amount will more than cover the sum you mention," he added quietly.

Then he laid a five-pound note on the table before Tom.

"I return your loan with many thanks, Tom. It was very good of you to oblige me. I hope your kindness has not put you to the slightest inconvenience."

Tom flushed to the roots of his hair, mumbled some inarticulate remarks, and looked extremely uncomfortable.

"I regret to say that I have been short of funds for some little time," continued Lamb, "as I had undertaken to pay my younger brother's expenses at college, and they have been much heavier than I anticipated."

He took a letter out of the pocket-book, and handed it to the rector.

"That," he said, "contains an acknowledgment of the various sums he has received during the last few months. Perhaps you will kindly read it aloud."

It was short but to the point:

DEAR OLD FELLOW,—

I got the fiver all right. With what you sent me before that makes nearly one hundred pounds I owe you. You're a regular old trump, and I'll work myself to skin and bone to pay you every penny I've got out of you.

Your affectionate brother,
BOB.

The rector laid down the letter with an embarrassed cough. Even Grigsby shifted his stout legs uneasily, and looked almost as uncomfortable as Tom. The defendant had not only refuted the charge, but had done so by proving himself capable of a piece of quixotic self-sacrifice, eminently characteristic of his hitherto saintly reputation.

His accusers began to realise that if by any possibility the prosecution should collapse, their position would be, to say the least of it, distinctly embarrassing. The rector flushed and hesitated, and wiped his spectacles with nervous fingers; but eventually he pulled himself together, and again advanced to the charge.

"I confess that your explanation appears on the face of it satisfactory, and even—even—I think I may say, does you credit. But that is, after all, merely a minor matter. For some time past you have been in the habit of paying what I feel perfectly justified in describing as clandestine visits to London, and returning home by the last train. That, of course, is not a crime, but it is, to say the least of it, when taken along with other circumstances, unseemly. Can you explain it?"

"I had private business to attend to in London," rejoined Lamb calmly, "which kept me later than was at all agreeable to myself. With your kind permission I will defer stating what that business was until I have decided whether my private affairs are a legitimate subject for discussion in the present company."

As this seemed a palpable attempt to evade the question, Grigsby and the rector breathed more freely, and exchanged a meaning glance. Tom recovered his self-possession, and pocketed the five-pound note. Jobson again regarded the curate with an admiring eye.

The rector had some feeling for the dramatic. He wished to lead gradually up to a climax, and so kept back the letter and photograph.

"To-day," he said, "owing to various circumstances which I need not describe in detail, Tom went to London to—to—in short, to investigate what you must

allow me to describe as your very questionable proceedings."

During this speech the rector stammered, and looked exceedingly ill at ease. He seemed to realise more distinctly than he had done before that it was at least a somewhat unusual thing for one gentleman to play the spy on another.

"I will not enter into details," he continued hurriedly, "but I may say that at a late hour he discovered you at the stage-door of the Empress Theatre, attired in the most unclerical and unseemly costume in which you now appear, and assisting a popular actress to enter a hansom. How do you explain conduct which in a clergyman may be fairly described as decidedly unbecoming?"

For the first time Lamb, who had hitherto been exasperatingly self-possessed, showed manifest signs of embarrassment. He flushed, hesitated, and glanced timidly at the faces opposite.

"I see," he said at length, "that I shall have to make a confession which I had hoped would be unnecessary."

Any doubts which might have troubled his self-appointed judges were swept away by this unexpected statement. It was quite evident that he had determined to plead guilty, and throw himself upon the mercy of the court.

"I trust," said the rector sternly, "that while you do not attempt to prevaricate, you will remember that there are ladies present. Shall I request them to withdraw?"

"Oh, dear no!" rejoined Lamb. "Why should they? I should in any case have told Dorothy all about it. I don't think she would mind. I am only afraid that you yourself will perhaps not altogether approve of my conduct, though under the circumstances I think it was not only justifiable, but even unavoidable."

"Go on," said the rector.

"You will perhaps remember that some little time ago I asked you if you could oblige me with a temporary loan of twenty-five pounds?"

"I—ah—um—yes, I do remember something of the kind," stammered the rector. "I—I—was rather short of funds at the time."

"Exactly so," continued Lamb. "I tried others, including Mr. Grigsby, and, curiously enough, they were all short of funds. I was obliged to raise the money somehow or other, or break my promise to

Bob. Well, at one time—before I took Orders—I had literary aspirations. I had written a number of stories and plays which still remained in manuscript. The idea struck me that in such an emergency I might make a little money by them.

“I tried the stories first. They were declined with thanks. Then I tried one of the plays—a perfectly harmless little comedy of which the bishop himself could not disapprove. To my astonishment it was accepted, and an early date fixed for its production. I was expected to attend a few of the rehearsals, and I thought it more seemly to do so in layman’s clothes, which I borrowed from a friend. That explains what you have described as my clandestine visits to London, and my appearance in what I frankly admit is a somewhat inappropriate costume.

“The little play proved a distinct success, and last night I sold the copyright for £100, which will enable me to clear off all the liabilities I have incurred in doing what I could to assist my brother. I shall be sincerely grieved if my conduct is a source of pain or annoyance to you; but you must pardon my suggesting that if it had been in your power to give me a little temporary assistance I should never have dreamt of taking such a step.”

As the Rev. Matthew, in his blandest tones, proceeded with this provokingly simple explanation of circumstances which had hitherto appeared in the highest degree suspicious, the faces of his accusers had grown more and more puzzled and disconcerted. It seemed impossible to bring forward a charge to which this dreadfully glib, mild-voiced, self-possessed little man could not give a satisfactory reply. But the rector came of a fighting race, and eventually returned to the charge.

“Under the circumstances,” he said, “and taking into consideration the motives which influenced you, I might be willing to pass over your temporary association with the stage, but I fear your experience is that of many others. It is impossible to touch pitch without being defiled.”

He produced as trump cards the letter and photograph, and handed them to the curate.

“How do you,” he asked severely, “a clergyman, engaged to marry the daughter of my esteemed friend Mr. Grigsby, explain the receipt of such a letter as that?”

This was the crisis. Everyone awaited the culprit’s answer in breathless suspense.

To the surprise of all, the mild features of the Rev. Matthew expressed indignation rather than embarrassment.

“This, I believe,” he remarked, with the first symptoms of irritation he had yet shown, “this, I believe, is a private letter which I placed in my desk this morning. How did it come here?”

The rector blushed like a schoolgirl.

“Well,” he stammered, “I—I—that is we—the simple fact is we thought the circumstances justified a slight deviation from the usual course of procedure in—in such matters.”

“Apparently so,” rejoined Lamb quietly, and Grigsby and the rector moved uneasily, and blushed a deeper red. Grigsby was the first to recover.

“That’s all very well,” he blustered, “but accusing others won’t excuse yourself. How does it come about that, though engaged to my daughter, you receive such a letter as that from a common play-actress?”

“Very simply,” replied Lamb. “The common play-actress, as you call her, is my cousin, Miss Daisy Hawthorne. It was largely owing to her influence that my play was accepted. These references to her husband—which I now see might appear somewhat ambiguous to anyone unacquainted with the facts of the case—refer in a semi-humorous fashion to a situation in the play in which she took the part of an ill-used wife. She suggested a few alterations which she was anxious to talk over with me. I may add that she is going to be married next week to the eldest son of Lord Westham.”

The varying expressions of expectancy, triumph, and dismay which continually succeeded each other upon the faces of the self-constituted bench would have proved irresistibly comic to an observant onlooker.

The air of assured triumph which they had assumed at the production of the letter and photograph had given place to one of blank discouragement.

Grigsby’s rosy countenance began to look flabby and insignificant. Beads of perspiration stood on the rector’s brow. He was about to collapse into his seat, when he remembered that he had one more card to play. He mopped his brow nervously and continued:

“I—I am willing to admit that we have apparently done you some injustice, Lamb, and I am heartily glad, for your own sake, that you have been able to prove it. Still,

there is one very serious matter which I have not yet mentioned, reflecting, I regret to say, upon your character as a gentleman, and, above all, as a clergyman. Tom discovered, on the most reliable authority, that you were this very night locked up for being drunk and disorderly, and assaulting the police. Your presence here forces me to the conclusion that you have been released on bail. Have you any explanation to offer?"

"I could give you a perfectly satisfactory explanation without the least difficulty," rejoined Lamb placidly, "but I trust, I sincerely trust, that you will not press me to do so."

Once again a gleam of hope illumined the countenances of Grigsby and the rector. Dorothy, who had been smiling triumphantly through her tears, again looked anxious and distressed, while Tom and Jobson regarded the hitherto victorious defendant with eager curiosity.

"I expected this," remarked the rector severely; "or, rather, I should more accurately describe my feelings if I said that I feared it. If you decline to give any explanation you force us to draw our own conclusions."

"I can explain the whole thing easily enough, and as you insist upon it I shall do so," rejoined Lamb, and Grigsby and the rector again moved uneasily at the sound of his mild voice. "When I went to the theatre I thought, for various reasons, it would be advisable to go in layman's clothes. I borrowed the suit I am now wearing from a friend living in chambers, and I left mine with him. He is rather a mischievous young fellow, with a passion for practical joking, and last night he put on my clothes during my absence—he had played me the same trick once or twice before—and parading the streets with a number of boon companions got into a row with a policeman and was eventually locked up. I had, unfortunately, left my card-case in my coat-pocket, and instead of giving his own name he gave one of my cards—in fact, I believe he distributed them right and left."

"I rushed to his chambers after getting out of the theatre, and found them locked. I hunted up one of his friends and heard what I have told you. I had to give up the idea of getting hold of my own clothes, and drive to the station in order to catch the last train."

It was all over. The prosecution had no longer a leg to stand on. The defendant

left the court without a stain upon his character, and the guilty and embarrassed faces of his judges contrasted curiously with his own blandly smiling countenance. But the rector was game to the last.

"This friend of yours," he said testily, "do we—do I know him personally?"

"Ye-es," replied Lamb reluctantly.

"What is his name?"

"I would rather not answer that question."

"I make a point of it, Lamb, I make a point of it. If your story is true you need not have the slightest compunction about showing the fellow up. A man who would play you such a trick as that deserves to be horsewhipped. Come, who was it?"

"It was Dick."

"What!" exclaimed the rector. "Dick! My son, Dick!"

"Yes."

What otherwise might have been said or done, what ingenious excuses, what abject apologies each guilty judge might have offered to the victim of his mistaken zeal will never be known, for after one breathless pause this utterly unexpected climax ended in a peal of irrepressible laughter, again and again renewed.

Finally the whole company shook hands all round, and Lamb was placed in the most comfortable chair, and Grigsby himself cut the cold beef for him, and the rector handed him the mustard and pickles, and Dorothy and Edith made tea for him with a spirit lamp, and Tom repeatedly drank his health and patted him on the back, and Jobson sat at a little side-table and disposed of huge supplies of beef and beer, and cheese and bread, and all was peace and joy.

Dick was considered so peculiarly well qualified to take care of himself that no one was much concerned about the awkward situation in which he was supposed to be placed.

The young scapegrace justified his reputation. It subsequently turned out that he had been released the same night on giving his real name and address, and that the magistrate before whom he appeared next morning, after listening, with considerably less than his accustomed gravity, to Dick's somewhat racy version of his own escapade, had discharged him with a little paternal advice on the dangers of practical joking.

Three months later the curate was offered an excellent living, and the vivacious Dorothy promptly became Mrs. Lamb.

Half-Minute Stories.

The Brightest and Best Little Stories of all Times.

We all of us know some anecdote which we think is the funniest we have ever heard. If a certain story has made you laugh, why not send it to us that others may share your enjoyment? Pleasures are so much greater if one's friends participate in them. Anecdotes should be sent to "Half-Minute Stories," THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. The source in every case must be given.

PAT'S BLESSING.

A VISITOR to Ireland was bidding farewell, and said to an attendant :

"Good-bye, Pat."

"Good-bye, yer honour. May Heaven bless you, and may every hair of your head be a candle to light your soul to glory."

"Well, Pat," he said, showing him a bald pate, "when that time comes there won't be much of a torchlight procession."



WHAT THE GROCER COULD DO.

JOHNNY's grandpa was explaining to Johnny about a conjuror he had seen, and about the wonderful tricks he did, and finished up by telling him of the hat-trick—how this man could bring oranges, eggs, and fancy boxes all out of an empty hat. Johnny wondered, but then said quickly :

"Grandpa, that is nothing to what the grocer up our street can do."

"Why, Johnny, what can he do?"

"Oh, he can give us the 1s. 10d. and 1s. 6d. butter all out of the same tub."



AN ARTIST'S EXCUSE.

LADY (who has pestered artist with questions for hours): "All your marine pictures represent the sea as being calm. Why don't you paint a storm once in a while?"

Artist: "We painters in oil can't paint a storm. I have often outlined a storm on the canvas, but as soon as I begin to spread on the oil-colours the waves subside, and the sea becomes as calm as a duck-pond."

Lady: "Well, I've read about the effect oil has in calming the waves, but I had no idea it was so effective as all that."

WHY HE FAILED.

A VOLUNTEER was endeavouring in vain to stop the encroachment of a stout gentleman during a procession.

"I tell you I can't get back," said the trespasser; "the crowd's pushing me forward."

Then an officer came along.

"Won't get back? Make him," said he: "Put the butt of your rifle in his chest. Don't tell me you can't; you are the stronger man of the two."

The private hesitated.

"Yes, sir; I know I'm the stronger man," he said. Then desperately he added: "But he's my employer, sir."



HE OF THE WHITE EYE.

VERY few people know how Mr. George Chirgwin, "the White-eyed Kaffir," got his white eye.

He was once engaged for a *fête* in a little village in Gloucestershire, and as his brother was his partner in those days, they did what is called a double-nigger act. A speck of dust got into George Chirgwin's eye, and the more he rubbed the injured optic the more it watered.

Almost frantic with pain and irritation, the unfortunate performer kept on rubbing, until a lot of the burnt cork came off.

Then the audience began to grin, so he rubbed away until his right eye was surrounded by a patch of flesh-colour. This invoked more laughter and a man was heard to say: "That nigger's got a white eye."

The white eye, duly painted round with white paint, has figured, with grand effect, at every subsequent performance.

A LESSON IN BOXING.

"WHAT are you going to do, John?" asked Mrs. McFazzle, as her husband unwrapped a pair of boxing-gloves.

"I'm going to give Johnny some lessons in self-defence," he answered. "Every boy should know how to take care of himself in an emergency. Come on, Johnny, I won't hurt you."

Twenty minutes later Mr. McFazzle returned with his hand on his face.

"Get me a piece of raw meat to put on my eye, and the arnica bottle."

"Why, you don't mean to say that Johnny—"

"No, I don't; of course I don't. Johnny's sittin' out in the garden now in sorrow and repentance. I've discovered that the only way to teach that boy is with a strap."



WHY CABBY WEPT.

A CABMAN once drove a lady and her little girl from Euston to Charing Cross.

On the way a particle of dust entered the eye of the driver, causing him considerable annoyance.

On arriving at their destination the lady gave the cabby just the bare fare, and then, this being the first opportunity the cabman had, he took out his handkerchief and attempted to extract the cause of his pain.

The little girl, perceiving this, spoke a few words to her mother, and then ran back to the Jehu, saying:

"Please, cabby, mother says you are not to cry; here is another sixpence."



NEVER AGAIN.

THERE is a certain judge who rather prides himself on his vast and varied knowledge of law. The other day he was compelled to listen to a case that had been brought up from a lower court.

The young practitioner who appeared for the appellant was long and tedious. He brought in all the elementary text-books, and quoted the fundamental propositions of the law. At last the judge thought it was time to make an effort to hurry him up.

"Can't we assume," he said blandly, "that the Court knows a little law itself?"

"That's the very mistake I made in the lower court," answered the young man: "I don't want to let it defeat me twice."

Yet it did!

APPRECIATED HER REMARKS.

"SEE the melting sunset!" exclaimed the poetic young woman. "See how the crystal tints seem to be stolen from the rainbow mist and hung boldly over the mountain, the banners of beauty, only to fade, alas, with the dying daylight."

"I beg your pardon," said the young man with the close-cut hair, "but would you mind saying all that again?"

"Do you think it so very pretty?"

"I should say so! I'm going to write it down. 'Melting sunset,' 'crystal tints,' 'rainbow mist,' 'dying daylight'—they're grand! You see, I'm going to run an 'American bar' in London, and I've been puzzled almost to death trying to think up new names for mixed drinks."



AN UNPRINCELIKE PROCEEDING.

WHEN George IV. was Prince Regent he visited Doncaster, and at the time His Royal Highness was suffering from a cold.

One day the Royal party were showing themselves to the people from the balcony.

"Which is the Prince? I must see the Prince!" cried an excited old Yorkshire woman who had come to see the first gentleman in Europe.

"That's him," said a bystander, pointing upwards, "him with a handkerchief in his hand."

"Him!" cried the old lady in profound contempt. "That the Prince? Why, he blows his own nose!"



THE TOPER'S DINNER.

INSTEAD of going to their work one Monday, a number of workmen entered a public-house, determined to spend the day there.

About noon a woman looked in and said, addressing one of the party:

"I suppose you are not coming home to dinner to-day, so I've brought your share."

So saying she placed a dish and plate carefully tied up in front of the toper, and went away.

"Looks well after you, your wife does," said a mate. "Let's see what it's like."

"Ay, let us have a taste," said the husband, as he untied the bundle.

But the dish was empty, and there was a note with it, which ran as follows:

"I hope you will enjoy your dinner; it is the same as myself and the children are having at home."

SERVED HIM RIGHT.

A MAN went into a furniture dealer's the other day and asked to be shown a certain thing labeled 10s. 6d.

"Really," exclaimed the shopkeeper, "there must be a mistake."

"I can't help that," exclaimed the man, "it's your fault if you've put the wrong price on it."

"Excuse me, I——"

"No, I shan't excuse you. Show me the article."

After seeing it, he bought it and went away satisfied.

"Well," said the shopman, "that is a good 'un. I put a 10s. 6d. label on by mistake when it ought to have been 5s. 6d."



THE ELOPEMENT WAS OFF.

HE had adjusted the rope ladder and stood waiting in breathless silence.

Suddenly her face appeared at the window.

"Darling," she murmured, "you will have to go without me."

"What!" he cried hoarsely. "Do you falter at the last moment? Speak, Marian. What is it that keeps you back?"

The young girl buried her face in her hands.

"I'm sorry, John," she moaned, "but pa has just left a note in my desk saying that I may have that new hat after all."

John knew it was all over then, and took away his rope ladder to look for another girl.



WHAT THE HENS LAID ON.

A TEACHER was explaining to a class of small boys the meaning of certain words in the lesson.

"Here is the word 'average,'" said she. "Can anyone tell me the meaning of this word?"

A small hand was instantly held up.

"Well, Johnnie."

"Please ma'am, it's the thing a hen lays an egg on."

"How in the world do you make that out?" asked the teacher blankly.

"Please, ma'am," said Johnnie, hanging his head, "please I heard mother say that a hen laid an egg on an average once a day!"

ROUGH ON THE RECTOR.

A RETIRED Naval officer became rector of a country parish.

On one occasion his parishioners, wishing to give him a surprise, bought a flag for the church tower. When the rector saw it on the tower he at once ordered it to be taken down.

On being asked his reason for doing so, he indignantly answered:

"Allow that flag to fly over my church—never! Do you know what that particular flag signifies? 'In distress—want a pilot!'"



REAL COURAGE.

SHE was a small, fragile-looking woman, with a quiet look in her grey eyes. He was tall and muscular, and the coveted letters V.C. stood against his name.

It was a hot Indian evening, and the glass doors leading to the verandah had been left wide open to admit as much air as possible.

As the dessert came round the conversation turned on a shipwreck that had just taken place off the Channel Islands, attended by a terrible loss of life owing to the overcrowding of the boats by the panic-stricken passengers.

"The worst of it is," she was saying, "one can never tell until the catastrophe occurs whether one will keep one's head or not."

Hardly had the words left her lips when he noticed a deadly pallor come into her face, and for a few seconds she sat still and motionless.

"How hot the night is," she then replied to his silent look of inquiry.

She continued discussing the shipwreck in a quiet, deliberate manner, but his observant eye noticed how still and motionless she sat.

Presently, with a little sigh of relief, she turned to him and said: "Now, would you mind just getting up and killing that snake? It is over by the door there. I suddenly felt it winding itself up my leg, and had to keep quite still until it unwound itself again, for the slightest movement would have meant death, you know."

"Thank you," she said, as he returned. "By-the-way, do you know what is better than 'presence of mind' in an accident? No? Why, absence of body." And she laughed merrily. But the V.C. went home that night thoughtful.

JUST LIKE A WOMAN.

A YOUNG and well-dressed woman entered Charing Cross Telegraph Office the other day, and wrote out a dispatch to be sent to Manchester. She read it over, reflected for a moment, and then dropped it on the floor and wrote a second. This she also threw away, but was satisfied with the third and sent it off. The three telegrams read :

1. Never let me hear from you again !
2. No one expects you to return !
3. Come home, dearest—all is forgiven !



STRANGE COINCIDENCES.

A GENTLEMAN had a little dog suffering with a sore eye. He took the animal to a veterinary surgeon, who gave him some ointment to apply to the wound. The treatment was continued for some months, but without any good result.

One day the maidservant said that she had heard of an ointment with wonderful healing powers, and she asked if she might get some that afternoon. Permission was given to do so.

At that very moment the postman knocked at the door and among the things he left was a small packet containing a sample of the very ointment of which the master of the house had never before heard !

A clergyman once got into a 'bus in London, and happened to seat himself next to another brother of the cloth.

He had no sooner sat down than he was greeted by his neighbour with :

"Hullo, how are you, Carter ? Pleased to see you again."

"I'm very well, thanks," replied the newcomer, "but I'm afraid you have the advantage of me."

"I'm Histon from Garfield, you're surely Carter of Lofton ?"

"No, I'm afraid I've never even heard of the place, though my name is Carter."

It needed much explanation to convince Histon that his neighbour was not the man he thought he was.

Coincidences of a similar nature to the above must be known to many readers, who are invited to put them on paper and then send them to the Editor, *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than May 8th. All coincidences must be duly authenticated, and payment will be made for any published. Mark your envelopes, "Coincidence."

GOING TO EXTREMES.

"You write in too solemn a way, young man," said the editor to the new reporter: "Try to be more crisp and humorous in your style."

That evening a fire broke out in a butcher's shop in the town, and the new member of the staff reported it as follows :

"Mr. William Brisket, the well-known butcher, has been losing flesh rapidly of late."



ALL SHE WANTED.

ONE of the richest men living, whose immense wealth makes him a target for poor people, has recently been in Paris, and the way in which he repelled one of the applicants for his generosity is related like this :

On the opposite side of the hotel table sat a woman, who had once been rich.

"Monsieur," said she, "you Englishmen are so chivalrous, so ready to assist those in distress."

"Yes," said the man of wealth, hesitating. He had heard that before, and thought he knew what was coming next.

"Would you, with your usual generosity, do me a favour and a great kindness?"

"Yes, madam ; that is, it depends somewhat—"

"Think well, monsieur, before you promise, for it is a great kindness."

It was the same old plea that he had heard many times before from people who wanted a loan.

"I am afraid, madam, that I shall have to—but what is it you wish?"

"Only that you would be kind enough, monsieur, to pass me the mustard. You have everything on your side of the table."



MADAM'S RUSE.

"FIRE! Fire!"

The cries proceeded from the drawing-room, where the lady of the house was sitting, and penetrated into the kitchen.

The next moment the nurse and cook burst into the room, followed by two gallant defenders of the country and one civilian.

"There"—a pause—"you can go back again," said madam, who was reclining on the sofa. "I only wanted to see how many followers were in the house."

Some amusing stories of foreigners' difficulties with the English language were submitted for competition. Here are the best.

OUR LANGUAGE AGAIN!

A SPANIARD entered a chemist's shop the other day and startled the assistant by remarking: "I vant somethings for a cow."

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the astonished shopman.

"I haf a cow—a bad cow!" replied the excited foreigner.

"I think you want a veterinary surgeon, don't you?" asked the chemist.

"Ah! you not understand. I haf a cow in my chest—you hear? See!"

"Oh, I understand—a cough!" replied the chemist. "Of course I can give you something for that."

The puzzled foreigner is still wondering why, if b-o-u-g-h, is pronounced "bow," c-o-u-g-h doesn't spell "cow."



CABBY AND THE TEUTON.

A BULKY German hurried out of the station and flung himself into the nearest hansom.

"Where to, guv'nor?" asked the Jehu, peering through the little trap-door.

"Ich vant vun eye oben."

"Wot?"

The reply came promptly:

"Ich vant vun eye oben."

Cabby was fairly puzzled, and scratched his head. Then he said:

"Oh, yer want one eye open, do yer? All right, shut the other and git out; that's the best I can do for yer."

A friendly passer-by intervened, and all was peace when it was made clear that "No. 1 High Holborn" was Gustav's destination.



GOT THE WRONG WORD.

A DUTCH gentleman recently paying a visit to the country house of an English friend, was very fond of the preserves made by the housekeeper, but which he persisted in calling pickles.

His persistency had a funny ending when, on leaving for his native Holland, he addressed himself thus to the astonished housekeeper:

"Madam," said he, placing his hand over his heart in characteristic Continental style, "Adieu, and may the good Lord pickle you."

Needless to say he meant "preserve."

THE SLIP HE MADE.

A FRENCHMAN who knew very little English paid a visit to some friends living in England. He was very anxious to make the most of his time, and so during his stay resolutely refused, unless compelled by necessity, to express himself in his mother tongue.

One of his peculiarities was that he never appealed to anybody, except as a last resource, for help in the search of an expression or word that failed him.

One day he received from a friend a note thus worded:

DEAR M.—Have heard from my old Uncle B., who informs me that he has invited you to accompany him on his daily constitutional. Give him the slip by R.'s Pond. Come round to me and I will explain why. By doing so, you will greatly oblige,
—Yours. G.

The Frenchman, whose powers of translation had not included slang, coming to the word "slip," hesitated, and then looked the word up. Slip—*faux-pas* was what he found. "Give him the slip"—he soliloquised, meant: "Push him, make him fall."

So the all-unconscious Frenchman tremblingly set out in company of G.'s old uncle.

On arriving at the spot mentioned in his friend's letter, the Frenchman hooked his walking-stick round the leg of the much-bewildered old gentleman, who fell flat in the mud, and in a very irate mood scrambled to his feet only to perceive his sometime companion disappearing round the corner.

He wended his way home, vowing vengeance on the head of the really innocent Frenchman, who, in the meantime, had reached his friend's rooms; there he recounted the little incident in which he had played such a prominent part.

To his amazement G. collared him, rage depicted on his features, and roared out:

"Good gracious, man, you have ruined me in the sight of my relative, who will never believe that I haven't perpetrated this joke, and will disinherit me."

When he had cooled down he explained the meaning of the expression that had so misled the poor Frenchman, who returned home crestfallen, and inwardly purposing to be less self-reliant in the future.

A Leap-Year Missive.

By IDA ALEXANDER.

Telling how a practical joker tried to cheat the god of Love of his due.

JOHN WATKINS sat in his den, mixing a whiskey and soda with the skill which practice gives, and the precision that forty odd years demand. As he worked he frowned, and frowning was not becoming, nor habitual, as his unlined face testified. Still, irrespective of the penalty exacted, a man must be out of humour at times; and, by Jove! he had ample justification, he thought, smoothing the wrinkle away, however, with his well-shaped hand.

It wasn't enough that his yacht was laid up for repairs; his motor-car beaten by an inferior machine, in a well-contested race. Annoying, to be sure, but bearable. Add to these vexations, the admittance to his exclusive club of an undesirable member, against his wish and influence; the absence of Samson, his servant, who knew his ways; the advice, warning, command of his doctor to "ease up," and the case against Fate is without a flaw.

He pulled the leather chair in front of the fireplace, and began the perusal of his letters. As he read his faced cleared. Invitations, sweet acceptances of others, and a long letter from Billy Montrose, who had gone off years ago, goodness knows where or why, but was coming back to civilisation, with sundry trophies of skill; among them, standing out, indeed, from all the others, a tiger-skin for John Watkins, himself. He read it twice, before picking up the next. His good-humour went down with a clatter of the tinkling bell. The soft-voiced substitute for Samson stood before him, without delay:

"You rang, sir?" he asked superfluously.

"I want to know what you mean, bringing bills to me?" and he threw the tailor's missive across the room.

The man picked it up, before he answered: "You haven't given me my wages this month, Mr. Watkins."

"You should have reminded me," he said more civilly; "I'll let you have them in the morning."

"Very well, sir."

The man withdrew, clearly victorious, instead of stumbling out excuses, as Samson would have done.

There remained one letter in an unfamiliar hand. He opened it without delay, instead of searching for hopeless clues, as a feminine reader would have done. The tiger-skin of Billy Montrose faded into insignificance. "By Jove!" he muttered, gazing at the letter in fascinated bewilderment, and yet the meaning of it was patent to the dullest.

DEAR MR. WATKINS,—

I fear that this letter may appear to you indelicate, yet I, who have never desired to usurp man's prerogative in the matter, write it calmly, without a blush. The year must be my excuse for handling things masculine with hands feminine. And yet, why make excuses? The years that have passed over both our heads, if they have taken much, have given at least this: a proper scorn of conventional barriers, the purpose and the power to draw them down, look over, through, beyond them, if they stand between us and our heart's desire.

We are of suitable age, station, and our tastes are, I think, congenial. We are both lonely—perhaps we scarcely acknowledge that, even to ourselves, except at times. But it is so, and the years are skipping away. This is my initial effort, so it is doubtless crudely worded.

If you agree with me, if you think well of—in short, if you desire me for a wife, I see nothing but happiness in store for us. In any event I ask you, as a gentleman, to give me a verbal answer. I shall be at home this evening.

Most sincerely yours,
ADELAIDE GRAHAM.

"Adelaide Graham! Of all people, Adelaide Graham!" he said aloud.

The letter, fine, white, unperfumed, suggested her. Her writing was unknown to him, but it breathed of her in its regularity, beauty, and absence of underlined words. Their acquaintance had been of the most casual; he had never breathed a sigh at her shrine, though he remembered quite clearly the snow-white *débutante* of ten odd years before.

Yes, the years had slipped away, and her juvenility, as is not always the case, had

vanished with them. They had left her a well-preserved, high-bred-looking woman, thirty at least, with no "mission" to account for her unwedded state.

"Poor little girl!" he said to himself tenderly. "Why, what she must have been suffering the other night at Ashton's. And, by George, come to think of it, she didn't seem to want to talk. Yachting, polo, golf, didn't seem to rouse her interest, though I tried everything I could think of when we sat out that dance. She seemed in a brown study; brightened up a little about hunting, I believe. But she's a thoroughbred, all right! When I praised the little Maskwell, she was quite enthusiastic, and I'll swear her hand never trembled as it rested on my arm! Yes, a thoroughbred," he repeated musingly, "but we don't want her, Jack, old boy. Two are enough in the family, and we'll do our own hunting." The dog, with his large, intelligent eyes fixed on his master's face, wagged his tail in ratification of the decision.

The day wore away, an interminable day it seemed, with the vexing sense of something impending, added to the long list of grievances.

He would be very early; gravely, courteously he would make known to her the impossibility of her "heart's desire." He would take her hand, and talk to her as an elder brother might. He must make it clear that this had not lessened the esteem he had for her—"that I always have had, and always will have, Miss Graham." That was rather neat—past, present, and future esteem—he must remember. A goodly gift, that, to a maiden who had risked it all!

Still, it might be well not to be too early. Who can tell what may happen in a lengthy interview? Better perhaps, to be a little late, put on an air of camaraderie, laugh her out of the notion; resurrect the trite old saying about "fish in the sea." Yes, that was distinctly better; not have any high-flown nonsense, just laugh her out of it!

Laugh, yes, he could laugh quite readily about it, but what about Adelaide Graham herself! Searching his memory for remembrance of her, he couldn't quite fancy a man laughing at her. She was reserved, quiet, rather unapproachable—at least of late years, and it was certainly a sorry enough matter for her.

Suppose she cried! Well, well, in that case a man might—yes, he almost must, comfort her. Words wouldn't avail much, but there were other ways. Without doubt

she would cry, there was no question about it, and perhaps it was as well to be early. It took some time for a fit of weeping to be soothed into every day composure.

Accordingly, Mr. John Watkins, faultlessly arrayed, took his unaccustomed way to the house that sheltered the fair writer of the disturbing missive. He walked, feeling strangely nervous as the time for the interview drew near. Twice he reached forth his hand to ring the bell, and twice it fell at his side. The third time he pressed it strongly, and a little tingle went through his veins. The die was cast!

The butler—the man's face was strange to him—took his card. "Shame, shame," he reflected, "that I don't know that fellow as well as Samson." Yes, Miss Graham was in. Would Mr. Watkins please come in?

His head was in a whirl as he was ushered into the softly lighted room, with its glowing fire and scent of flowers. Miss Graham came forward, and gave him her hand, frankly and cordially, without a shadow of embarrassment. A cool little bit of a hand, quite lost in the one that clasped it.

She was dressed in shimmering grey, he noticed, with a quick glance of approval. Clearly, she knew how to dress. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes rivalled the diamonds at her throat. She was almost pretty, and a stranger would have subtracted a third from her age.

"I was quite surprised when Williams brought your card, Mr. Watkins," she said, after a moment.

"Surprised!"

"Pleasantly so," she said, laughing at his blank tone. "I was looking forward to a long and dull evening. I was to have gone to the Teesdales' to-night, but changed my mind, and sent regrets almost at the last moment. I am restless. I've tried half-a-dozen books, but couldn't find anything in them as interesting as my own thoughts. How is it that you didn't go?"

"Where? Oh, the Teesdales? I believe I did have an invitation, but, of course, I wouldn't have gone under any consideration to-night," he said meaningly.

"Their parties are generally rather dull," she answered quickly, "and the crush and heat become at times unbearable. It's a tonic to steal off by oneself for a night, and draw a breath of pure, wholesome air. I've a great fancy for my 'ain fireside.'"

"I can quite understand it, a fire like this. I have a horror of those blazing logs that never burn."

"So have I. I've never become, never can become, used to such makeshifts. I'd rather be cold before what had been a coal fire, than warm my hands at the flickering gas in a grate that doesn't even look like a fire."

"Yes, I agree with you exactly, Miss Graham. I wanted to have a talk with you to-night—a little talk——"

"Yes, I have so wanted to continue our interrupted conversation of the other night. It was so interesting, quite different from the usual ball-room nonsense. I've thought of it often since. Polo, golf, yachting; there were so many things we talked of. And you told me about that friend of yours, you remember, who was lost off the *Sea Shell*. And at what a loss you were to account for it, till you found the letter from the girl he lo—liked, and that then you knew it was suicide. I can't think of anything more cowardly than suicide, can you? Yet they say it is on the increase."

"Yes, I believe I've heard that it is—but——"

"But you don't think the ones who commit suicide are a loss to the community? I have felt as you do, at times, and again I have realised how much each little life means to someone else."

"Yes, quite so. I——"

She interrupted him again, laughingly forcing him into an argument, and laughingly picking it to pieces. She talked well, but he scarcely responded to her gay mood. She was talking against time, and he knew it. Both understood the futility of it; he, knowing himself; she, guessing at the armour with which the years intrench a man.

"If he were twenty! If he were only twenty, I might; but it is hopeless. You can't fight forty years with snowballs. I may as well have it over."

Accordingly, after a little while, she allowed a silence to fall, and gazed abstractedly into the fire, nervously turning a plain gold band on her left hand, round with her right. Opportunity had come his way, he was quick to seize it.

"Miss Graham, I came to-night to tell you something——"

"Wait," she said, "wait a moment. I have something to tell you."

"Let me speak, I pray you. I know what you would say."

Even then he found it difficult. She looked so fair, so unapproachable, so far away, that the rush of words vanished before it came. He reddened as he remem-

bered the picture he had drawn of her, with soft cheek wet with tears of love for him. The very memory of the letter, however, nerved him to go on. It wasn't easy, though, with the clear eyes looking at him, critically, he felt, noting, perhaps, the place where the hair was retreating before the victorious general, Time.

"Miss Graham, this morning I received a letter."

"Yes," she said, with an apparent lack of interest in the matter. What an actress the woman was! By Jove! he'd break through that mask of ice!

"It was from a lady, a leap-year missive. With a 'true scorn of conventional barriers' this lady wrote to remind me that 'the years are slipping away.'"

It wasn't at all the way he had imagined the subject beginning; he had rather fancied that she would introduce it, and in all his conjuring up of the hour, he had never expected her to look like that. Grief, anger, love, hate even, he might have been prepared for, but surely no man would have been led to expect amusement. And yet, it shone in her eyes, and the shadow of a dimple was deepening on either cheek.

There was nothing laughable. By Jove, no!—a woman was behaving badly that laughed, those quotations should have made a nice woman blush. The amusement in her face vanished, before the embarrassment in his.

"That was rather an unusual letter to receive, Mr. Watkins, and the information it contained was superfluous, laughable, I might almost say. The knowledge of the vanishing years comes with the passing of the twenties."

"That wasn't the subject of the letter," he said, nettled—exasperated almost beyond endurance. "It was merely an explanatory sentence, making clear the lady's reason for writing, I may safely say, a most unusual letter."

"Yes?" the quiet voice questioned.

"It contained a proposal of marriage."

Even then she didn't bury her face in her hands, and cry in her grief and confusion. Her clear, bright, frank eyes still dwelt on his own. The only trace of emotion she showed was the turning, turning of the ring on her finger.

"And I am to congratulate you?" she queried.

"No," he answered almost roughly, "I have made up my mind to decline the honour."

"Oh, I'm sorry, so sorry."

The fingers entwined nervously, still caressed the shining band; the eyes, that fell before his own, glittered with something not unlike tears.

John Watkins, gentleman, cold and self-contained, was carried off his feet by an emotion that was not pity, but to which it is near akin.

"Adelaide! Adelaide darling!" he said hoarsely. "It was a foolish jest. I never meant it. Your letter—your sweet and precious letter—could it receive any answer but one?"

He bent towards her, the love-light in his eyes.

"I won't ask you to forgive me now, but, some time, perhaps."

"I forgive you now," she said simply, "but I fear I scarcely understand."

"The little letter that you wrote me; if some time, I will serve like a Jacob if need be—if at the end—when I write you a letter—a letter like this dear one to me—if I may hope for forgiveness—and something more."

She raised her eyes to his.

"I never wrote you a letter."

"You—never—wrote me—a letter!"

"No."

For answer he placed the letter in her hand.

The colour came as she read it, flaming over her cheek and brow and bosom, then receding, left her strangely white. She read it over again. Undated—signed with another name than the writer's. She studied it with a woman's minute scrutiny, looked at the postmark, and passed it back to him with a half-smile. "The first of April," she said. "It is a poor and foolish jest."

Something in his face touched her. "Don't trouble about it," she said softly. "It was a very natural mistake. I freely forgive it."

"But," he said passionately, "I want something more! Let the jest recoil on the jesters. Let's make it come true. I love you."

A woman is seldom deceived as to tone. The softly-spoken words rang clear and true.

"I am sorry," she said, after a moment, "more sorry than I can say, but it is you who must forgive. There is someone else—there has always been someone else. He—we quarreled. It was years ago, and we thought we could never forgive; but forgiving is so easy. It is the forgetting that is hard. It was so long ago, and it has always been he, never anyone else, it never

could have been anyone else! I think you will feel better for knowing this, and I think it your right to know. He was a hot-headed boy, and I a girl, spoilt by a season of flattery, playing with hearts, my own and others, not knowing what fragile things they are. I was fond of him, I think I scarcely understood. I was so young, so happy, so certain that each year contained only love and joy. We quarreled, as I said. I think it was about some flowers he sent me. In a fit of perversity I wore others. Do I hurt you?"

He shook his head. "No, go on."

"He wrote me a letter that night and went away. A letter of reproach and scorn, but I read the love between the lines! It is faded and yellow, that old letter, and worn from re-reading. I was unhappy afterwards, always unhappy. But lately I received a letter; he is coming home. Shall I tell you more?"

"Yes, yes, go on."

"He has always loved me. He sent me this."

She turned the little gold band round to a flashing diamond that sparkled and gleamed in the firelight's glow.

"That was what I wanted to tell you. He wrote so much of you, and longs to see you again. And that is all, he's coming home!"

It was impossible to keep the joy out of her voice, though she ended with a sigh, and the same nervous twisting of the diamond ring.

When he spoke it was quite steadily. "Dear, I am glad in your joy, and you mustn't let any grief for me darken his home-coming. I shall be a better man for having loved you, and I won't lie to you. I don't easily forget. And you, Adelaide, some time—after he's been home a long, long time, and you have a stray thought, then you'll remember, won't you, a lonely old fellow who had a happy dream?"

She nodded silently, the tears thick in her eyes.

"And you'll tell me who it is?"

"Will Montrose."

"So it is Billy, dear old Billy! I am glad it is he. Yes, you should be very happy. And when he comes home, dear, old, rambling Billy, and you have talked and talked, and come down to friends, you tell him, will you, that I congratulate him, and love him none the less because I have gone searching for a tiger-skin to match the one he is bringing me."

Mr. Robert Barr writes so many really first-class short stories, that I personally should find a difficulty in saying which of them all was the best. Mr. Barr does not find the difficulty, and plumps for "Gentlemen, the King!" But when you ask him "Why?" he confesses his inability to tell. "It is my best," he says, "but neither wild horses nor an importunate Editor can extract a reason!"

Gentlemen, the King! ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By ROBERT BARR.

THE room was large, but with a low ceiling, and at one end of the lengthy, broad apartment stood a gigantic fireplace, in which was heaped a pile of blazing logs, whose light, rather than that of several lanterns hanging from nails along the timbered walls, illuminated the faces of the twenty men within. Heavy timbers, blackened with age and smoke, formed the ceiling.

The long, low, diamond-paned window in the middle of the wall opposite the door had been shuttered as completely as possible, but less care than usual was taken to prevent the light from penetrating into the darkness beyond, for the night was a stormy and tempestuous one, the rain lashing wildly against the hunting chalet, which, in its time, had seen many a merry hunting party gathered under its ample roof.

Every now and then a blast of wind shook the wooden edifice from garret to foundation, causing a puff of smoke to come down the chimney and the white ashes to scatter in little whirlwinds over the hearth. On the opposite side from the shuttered window was the door, heavily barred.

A long, oaken table occupied the centre of the room, and round this in groups, seated and standing, were a score of men, all with swords at their sides, bearing, many of them, that air of careless hauteur which is supposed to be a characteristic of noble birth.

Flagons were scattered upon the table, and a barrel of wine stood in a corner of the room furthest from the fireplace; but it was evident that this was no ordinary drinking party, and that the assemblage was brought about by some high purport, of a nature so serious that it stamped anxiety on every brow. No servants were present, and each man who wished a fresh flagon of wine had

to take his measure to the barrel in the corner and fill for himself.

The hunting chalet stood in a wilderness near the confines of the kingdom of Alluria, twelve leagues from the capital, and was the property of Count Staumn, whose tall, gaunt form stood erect at the head of the table, as he silently listened to the discussion which every moment was becoming more and more heated, the principal speaking parts being taken by the obstinate, rough-spoken Baron Brunfels, on the one hand, and the crafty, fox-like ex-Chancellor Steinmetz on the other.

"I tell you," thundered Baron Brunfels, bringing his fist down on the table, "I will not have the King killed! Such a proposal goes beyond what was intended when we banded ourselves together. The King is a fool, so let him escape like a fool. I am a conspirator, but not an assassin."

"It is justice rather than assassination," said the ex-Chancellor suavely, as if his tones were oil and the Baron's boisterous talk were troubled waters.

"Justice!" cried the Baron with great contempt. "You have learnt that cant word in the Cabinet of the King himself, before he thrust you out. He eternally prates of justice; yet, much as I loathe him, I have no wish to compass his death, either directly or through gabbing of justice."

"Will you permit me to point out the reason that induces me to believe his continued exemption and State policy will not run together?" replied the advocate of the King's death. "If Rudolph escapes he will take up his abode in a neighbouring territory, and there will inevitably follow plots and counter-plots for his restoration—thus Alluria will be kept in a constant state of turmoil. There will doubtless grow up

within the kingdom itself a party sworn to his restoration. We shall thus be involved in difficulties at home and abroad, and all for what? Merely to save the life of a man who is an enemy to each of us. We place thousands of lives in jeopardy, render our own positions insecure, bring continual disquiet upon the State, when all might be avoided by the slitting of one throat, even though that throat belong to the King."

It was evident that the lawyer's argumentative tone brought many to his side, and the conspirators seemed about evenly divided upon the question of life or death to the King. The Baron was about to break out again with some strenuousness in favour of his own view of the matter, when Count Staumn made a proposition that was eagerly accepted by all save Brunfels himself.

"Argument," said Count Staumn, "is ever the enemy of good comradeship. Let us settle the point at once, and finally, with the dice-box. Baron Brunfels, you are too seasoned a gambler to object to such a mode of terminating a discussion. Steinmetz, the law, of which you are so distinguished a representative, is often compared with a lottery, so you cannot look with disfavour upon a method that is conclusive, and as reasonably fair as the average decision of a judge. Let us throw, therefore, for the life of the King. I, as chairman of this meeting, will be umpire. Single throws, and the highest number wins. Baron Brunfels, you will act for the King, and if you win may bestow upon the monarch his life. Chancellor Steinmetz stands for the State. If he wins, then is the King's life forfeit. Gentlemen, are you agreed?"

"Agreed, agreed!" cried the conspirators, with practically unanimous voice.

Baron Brunfels grumbled somewhat, but when the dice-horn was brought, and he heard the rattle of the bones within the leathern cylinder, the light of a gambler's love shone in his eyes, and he made no further protest.

The ex-Chancellor took the dice-box in his hand, and was about to shake, when there came suddenly upon them three stout raps against the door, given apparently with the hilt of a sword. Many not already standing started to their feet, and nearly all looked one upon another with deep dismay in their glances. The full company of conspirators was present; exactly a score of men knew of the rendezvous, and now the twenty-first man outside was beating the oaken panels. The knocking

was repeated, but now accompanied by the words:

"Open, I beg of you."

Count Staumn left the table and, stealthily as a cat, approached the door.

"Who is there?" he asked.

"A wayfarer, weary and wet, who seeks shelter from the storm."

"My house is already filled," spoke up the Count. "I have no room for another."

"Open the door peacefully," cried the outlander, "and do not put me to the necessity of forcing it."

There was a ring of decision in the voice which sent quick pallor to more than one cheek. Ex-Chancellor Steinmetz rose to his feet with chattering teeth and terror in his eyes; he seemed to recognise the tones of the invisible speaker. Count Staumn looked over his shoulder at the assemblage with an expression that plainly said: "What am I to do?"

"In the fiend's name," hissed Baron Brunfels, taking the precaution, however, to speak scarce above his breath, "if you are so frightened when it comes to a knock at the door, what will it be when the real knocks are upon you? Open, Count, and let the insistent stranger in. Whether he leave the place alive or not, there are twenty men here to answer."

The Count undid the fastenings and threw back the door. There entered a tall man completely enveloped in a dark cloak that was dripping wet. Drawn over his eyes was a hunter's hat of felt, with a drooping, bedraggled feather on it. The door was immediately closed and barred behind him, and the stranger, pausing a moment when confronted by so many inquiring eyes, flung off his cloak, throwing it over the back of a chair; then he removed his hat with a sweep, sending the raindrops flying. The intriguants gazed at him, speechless, with varying emotions.

They saw before them His Majesty, Rudolph, King of Alluria.

If the King had any suspicion of his danger, he gave no token of it. On his smooth, lofty forehead there was no trace of frown and no sign of fear. His was a manly figure, rather over than under six feet in height; not slim and gaunt, like Count Staumn, nor yet stout to excess, like Baron Brunfels. The finger of Time had touched with frost the hair at his temples, and there were threads of white in his pointed beard, but his sweeping moustache was still as black as the night from which he came.

His frank, clear, honest eyes swept the company, resting momentarily on each, then he said in a firm voice, without the suspicion of tremor in it :

"Gentlemen, I give you good evening, and although the hospitality of Count Staumn has needed spurring, I lay that not up against him, because I am well aware his apparent reluctance arose through the unexpectedness of my visit ; and, if the Count will act as cupbearer, we will drown all remembrance of a barred door in a flagon of wine, for, to tell truth, gentlemen, I have ridden hard in order to have the pleasure of drinking with you."

As the King spoke these ominous words he cast a glance of piercing intensity upon the company, and more than one quailed under it. He stride to the fireplace, spurs jingling as he went, and stood with his back to the fire, spreading out his hands to the blaze. Count Staumn left the bolted door, took an empty flagon from the shelf, filled it at the barrel in the corner, and, with a low bow, presented the brimming measure to the King.

Rudolph held aloft his beaker of Burgundy, and as he did so spoke in a loud voice that rang to the beams of the ceiling :

"Gentlemen, I give you a suitable toast. May none here gathered encounter a more pitiless storm than that which is raging without."

With this he drank off the wine, and, inclining his head slightly to the Count, returned the flagon. No one save the King had spoken since he entered. Every word he had uttered seemed charged with double meaning, and brought to the suspicious minds of his hearers visions of a trysting-place surrounded by troops, and the King standing there, playing with them, as a tiger plays with its victims. His easy confidence appalled them.

When first he came in several who were seated remained so, but one by one they rose to their feet, with the exception of Baron Brunfels, although he, when the King gave the toast, stood. It was clear enough their glances of fear were not directed towards the King, but towards Baron Brunfels. Several pairs of eyes besought him in silent supplication, but the Baron met none of these glances, for his gaze was fixed upon the King.

Every man present knew the Baron to be reckless of consequences ; frankly outspoken, thoroughly a man of the sword, and at despiser of diplomacy. They feared that some moment he might blurt out the purp a

of the meeting, and more than one was thankful for the crafty ex-Chancellor's planning, who throughout had insisted there should be no documentary evidence of their designs, either in their houses or on their persons. Some startling rumours must have reached the King's ear to bring him thus unexpectedly upon them.

The anxiety of all was that someone should persuade the King they were merely a storm-besieged hunting party. They trembled in anticipation of Brunfels' open candour, and dreaded the revealing of the real cause of their conference. There was now no chance to warn the Baron ; a man who spoke his mind, who never looked an inch beyond his nose, even though his head should roll off in consequence, and if a man does not value his own head, how can he be expected to care for the heads of his neighbours ?

"I ask you to be seated," said the King, with a wave of the hand.

Now, what should that stubborn fool of a Baron do but remain standing when all but Rudolph and himself had seated themselves, thus drawing His Majesty's attention directly towards him, and making a colloquy between them well-nigh inevitable. Those next the ex-Chancellor were nudging him to stand also, and open whatever discussion there must ensue between themselves and His Majesty, so that it might be smoothly carried on ; but the ex-Chancellor was ashen grey with fear, and his hand trembled on the table.

"My Lord of Brunfels," said the King, a smile hovering about his lips, "I see that I have interrupted you at your old pleasure of dicing. While requesting you to continue your game as though I had not joined you, may I venture to hope the stakes you play for are not high ?"

Everyone held his breath, awaiting with deepest concern the reply of the frowning Baron, and when it came growling forth there was little in it to ease their disquiet.

"Your Majesty," said Baron Brunfels, "the stakes are the highest that a gambler may play for."

"You tempt me, Baron, to guess that the hazard is a man's soul ; but I see that your adversary is my worthy ex-Chancellor, and as I should hesitate to impute to him the character of the devil, I am led, therefore, to the conclusion that you play for a human life. Whose life is in the cast, my Lord of Brunfels ?"

Before the Baron could reply, ex-Chancellor Steinmetz rose, with some indecision,

to his feet. He began in a trembling voice :

"I beg your gracious permission to explain the reason of our gathering——"

"Herr Steinmetz," cried the King sternly, "when I desire your interference I shall call for it; and remember this, Herr Steinmetz, the man who begins a game must play it to the end, even though he finds luck running against him."

The ex-Chancellor sat down again, and drew his hand across his damp forehead.

"Your Majesty," spoke up the Baron, a ring of defiance in his voice, "I speak not for my comrades, but for myself. I begin no game that I fear to finish. We were about to dice in order to discover whether Your Majesty should live or die."

A simultaneous moan seemed to rise from the assembled traitors. The smile returned to the King's lips.

"Baron," he said, "I have ever chided myself for loving you, for you were always a bad example to weak and impressionable natures. Even when your overbearing, obstinate intolerance compelled me to dismiss you from the command of my army, I could not but admire your sturdy honesty. Had I been able to graft your love of truth upon some of my councillors, what a valuable group of advisers might have gathered round me! But we have had enough of comedy, and now tragedy sets in. Those who are traitors to their ruler must not be surprised if a double traitor is one of their number. Why am I here? Why do two hundred mounted and armed men surround this doomed chalet? Miserable wretches, what have you to say that judgment be not instantly passed upon you?"

"I have this to say," roared the Baron Brunfels, drawing his sword, "that, whatever may befall this assemblage, you, at least, shall not live to boast of it."

The King stood unmoved as Baron Brunfels was about to rush upon him, but Count Staumn and others threw themselves between the Baron and his victim, seeing in the King's words some intimation of mercy to be held out to them, could but actual assault upon his person be prevented.

"My Lord of Brunfels," said the King calmly, "sheath your sword. Your ancestors have often drawn it, but always for and never against the occupant of the throne. Now, gentlemen, hear my decision, and abide faithfully by it. Seat yourselves at the table, ten on each side, the dice-box between you. You shall not be dis-

appointed, but shall play out the game of life and death. Each dices with his opposite. He who throws the highest number escapes. He who throws the lowest places his weapon on the empty chair, and stands against yonder wall to be executed for the traitor that he is. Thus half of your company shall live, and the other half seek death with such courage as may be granted them. Do you agree, or shall I give the signal?"

With unanimous voice they agreed, all excepting Baron Brunfels, who spoke not.

"Come, Baron, you and my devoted ex-Chancellor were about to play when I came in. Begin the game."

"Very well," replied the Baron nonchalantly. "Steinmetz, the dice-box is near your hand; throw."

Someone placed the cubes in the leathern cup and handed it to the ex-Chancellor, whose shivering fingers relieved him of the necessity of shaking the box. The dice rolled out on the table—a three, a four, and a one. Those nearest reported the total.

"Eight!" cried the King. "Now, Baron."

Baron Brunfels carelessly threw the dice into their receptacle, and a moment after the spotted bones clattered on the table.

"Three sixes!" cried the Baron. "Heavens, if I only had such luck when I played for money!"

The ex-Chancellor's eyes were starting from his head, wild with fear.

"We have three throws," he screamed.

"Not so," said the King.

"I swear I understood that we were to have three chances," shrieked Steinmetz, springing from his chair. "But it is all illegal, and not to be borne. I will not have my life diced away to please either King or Commons."

He drew his sword and placed himself in an attitude of defence.

"Seize him, disarm him, and bind him," commanded the King. "There are enough gentlemen in this company to see that the rules of the game are adhered to."

Steinmetz, struggling and pleading for mercy, was speedily overpowered and bound; then his captors placed him against the wall and resumed their seats at the table. The next man to be doomed was Count Staumn. The Count rose from his chair, bowed first to the King and then to the assembled company, drew forth his sword, broke it over his knee, and walked to the wall of the condemned.

The remainder of the fearful contest was

carried on in silence, but with great celerity, and before a quarter of an hour was past ten men had their backs to the wall, while the remaining ten were seated at the table, some on one side and some on the other.

The men ranged against the wall were downcast, for however bravely a soldier may meet death in hostile encounter, it is a different matter to face it bound and helpless at the hands of an executioner.

A shade of sadness seemed to overspread the countenance of the King, who still occupied the position he had taken at the first, with his back towards the fire.

Baron Brunfels shifted uneasily in his seat, and glanced now and then with compassion at his sentenced comrades. He was the first to break the silence.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I am always loath to see a coward die. The whimpering of your former Chancellor annoys me; therefore will I gladly take his place, and give to him the life and liberty you perhaps design for me, if, in exchange, I have the privilege of speaking my mind regarding you and your precious Kingship."

"Unbind the valiant Steinmetz," said the King. "Speak your mind freely, Baron Brunfels."

The Baron rose, drew sword from scabbard, and placed it on the table.

"Your Majesty, backed by brute force," he began, "has condemned to death ten of your subjects. You have branded us as traitors, and such we are, and so find no fault with your sentence, merely recognising that you represent, for the time being, the upper hand. You have reminded me that my ancestors fought for yours, and that they never turned their swords against their sovereign. Why, then, have our blades been pointed towards your breast? Because, King Rudolph, you are yourself a traitor. You belong to the ruling class and have turned your back upon your order. You, a King, have made yourself a brother to the demagogue at the street corner, yearning for the cheap applause of the serf. You have shorn nobility of its privileges, and for what?"

"And for what?" echoed the King, with rising voice. "For this: That the ploughman on the plain may reap what he has sown; that the shepherd on the hillside may enjoy the increase which comes to his flock; that taxation may be light; that my nobles shall deal honestly with the people and not use their position for thievery and depredation; that those whom the State honours by

appointing to positions of trust shall content themselves with the recompense lawfully given, and refrain from peculation; that peace and security shall rest on the land, and that bloodthirsty swashbucklers shall not go up and down inciting the people to carnage and rapine under the name of patriotism. This is the task I set myself when I came to the throne. What fault have you to find with the programme, my Lord Baron?"

"The simple fault that it is the programme of a fool," replied the Baron calmly. "In following it you have gained the resentment of your nobles and have not even received the thanks of those pitiable hinds, the ploughman in the valley or the shepherd on the hills. You have impoverished us so that the clowns may have a few more coins with which to muddle in drink their already stupid brains. You are hated in cot and castle alike. You would not stand in your place for a moment were not an army behind you. Being a fool, you think the common people love honesty, whereas they only curse that they have not a share in the thieving."

"The people," said the King soberly, "have been misled. Their ear has been abused by calumny and falsehood. Had it been possible for me personally to explain to them the good that must ultimately accrue to a land where honesty rules, I am confident I would have had their undivided support, even though my nobles deserted me."

"Not so, Your Majesty; they would listen to you and cheer you, but when the next orator came among them, promising to divide the moon, and give a share to each, they would gather round his banner and hoot you from the kingdom. What care they for rectitude of government? They see no further than the shining florin that glitters on their palm. When your nobles were rich, they came to their castles among the people and scattered their gold with a lavish hand. Little recked the peasant how it was got so long as he shared it. 'There,' they said, 'the coin comes to us that we have not worked for.'

"But now, with castles deserted and retainers dismissed, the people have to sweat, to wring from traders the reluctant silver, and they cry: 'Thus it was not in times of old, and this King is the cause of it,' and so they spit upon your name and shrug their shoulders when your honesty is mentioned. And now, Rudolph of Alluria, I have done,

and I go the more jauntily to my death that I have had fair speech with you before the end."

The King looked at him, his eyes veiled with moisture. "I thought," he said slowly, "until to-night that I had possessed some qualities at least of a ruler of men. I came here alone among you, and although there are brave men in this company, yet I had the ordering of events as I chose to order them, notwithstanding that odds stood a score to one against me. I still venture to think that whatever failures have attended my eight years' rule in Alluria arose from faults of my own, and not through imperfections in the plan or want of speculation in the people.

"I have now to inform you that, if it is disastrous for a King to act without the co-operation of his nobles, it is equally disastrous for them to plot against their leader. I beg to acquaint you with the fact that the insurrection so carefully prepared has broken out prematurely. My capital is in possession of the factions, who are industriously cutting each other's throats to settle which one of two smooth-tongued rascals shall be their President. While you were dicing to settle the fate of an already deposed King, and I was sentencing you to a mythical death, we were all alike being involved in common ruin.

"I have seen to-night more property in flames than all my savings during the last eight years would pay for. I have no horsemen at my back, and have stumbled here blindly, a much bedraggled fugitive, having lost my way in every sense of the

phrase. And so I beg of the hospitality of Count Staumn another flagon of wine, and either a place of shelter for my patient horse, who has been left too long in the storm without, or else direction towards the frontier, whereupon my horse and I will set out to find it."

"Not towards the frontier," cried the Baron Brunfels, grasping his sword and holding it aloft, "but towards the capital. We will surround you, and hew for you a way through that fickle mob back to the throne of your ancestors."

Each man sprang to his weapon and brandished it above his head, while a ringing cheer echoed to the timbered ceiling.

"The King! The King!" they cried.

Rudolph smiled and shook his head.

"Not so," he said. "I leave a thankless throne with a joy I find it impossible to express. As I sat on horseback half-way up the hill above the burning city and heard the clash of arms, I was filled with amazement to think that men would actually fight for the position of ruler of the people. Whether the insurrection has brought freedom to themselves or not, the future alone can tell, but it has at least brought freedom to me. I now belong to myself. No man may question my motives or my acts. Gentlemen, drink with me to the new President of Alluria, whoever he may be."

But the King drank alone, none other raising flagon to lip. Then Baron Brunfels cried aloud:

"Gentlemen, the King!"

And never in the history of Alluria was a toast so heartily honoured.

* * MY FIRST LOVE. * *

*Her eyes were of the deepest blue,
Her cheeks as pink as pink could be,
Her hair was of a golden hue,
And she was all the world to me.*

*No matter if my changing mood
Brought sudden anger to my face
She never showed, as others would,
Of hot resentment any trace.*

*She shared my every joy and pain,
I told her all my inmost heart;
I knew she'd ne'er repeat again
One single secret I'd impart.*

*And how I loved her! Nothing will
Efface her memory from my soul.
Her gentle presence haunts me still,
Though waters o'er her body roll.*

*Alas! I dropped her in the stream,
One summer's day long years ago;
Sometimes I see her in a dream,
The lovely doll I worshiped so.*

Owsky's Revenge.

By STUART WISHING.

A story of schoolboy justice.

WE used to call the beggar "Owsky"; of course, that wasn't his proper name by a long chalk, for it was far too jaw-breaking for everyday use. It was nearly as bad as the name of a Welsh village, and Owsky was only the twiddly-bit at the end. He was a foreign kid—a Russian or Pole, I believe—and when you remember that fact you can make allowances.

I suppose you know that they are always scrapping with each other out there at fairly regular intervals, and I have no doubt that there are faults on both sides—six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, as my nurse used to say when I was a kid.

Owsky was rather keen on the Russian business, and used to try to explain how splendid *his* side was, and how rank the other, whenever he could get anybody to listen to him. This, as you may imagine, was not often, for I'd like to know if any sensible man takes any interest in a lot of musty dates and political squabbles.

The only times when he was worth hearing were when he described massacres, riots, knoutings, and other little jokes he'd heard of from his people. I gathered that his governor was a Socialist, or refugee, or some other brand of skunk; that, too, helps to explain Owsky's general lopsidedness.

On the whole, though he was no use at all in the cricket or footer lines, I considered him a well-meaning sort of madman. He was an absolute whale on societies and meetings. Whenever he got a chance he would try to get you to join a secret society he'd formed. In the end I believe he was the sole member. Lots of kids joined him at first, thinking they'd have no end of fun with a secret society—brigands, and hampers, and courageous deeds, and so on, you know.

When they found that he didn't play the game, but could only gas about the liberation of some "dear fatherland," and tout for subs. to help on "the cause"—Heaven knows *what* cause—they cooled down pretty

quickly, and told him to run his own beastly revolutions at his own beastly expense.

He never came very much in my way after the collapse of the "Bloodstained Banner Society," until one morning I heard no end of a row going on in Blake's study—next door but one to mine, you know.

As a rule, curiosity is not one of my many failings, but things being somewhat slack just then, it seemed the correct thing to have a look round and take my chance of any fun that was on the carpet. So I strolled into friend Blake's study, and the first thing I saw was the owner pinning Owsky down on the window-seat with one hand, while the other brandished a hefty-looking ash-plant. This rather surprised me, for Blake is a sleepy, stolid sort of person, who takes more interest in his meals than in anything else.

"Hello, Admiral, old man!" I said. "Going in for a little healthy exercise? What's the matter?"

"I found this beggar bagging a lot of my biscuits just now," he answered, taking a fresh grip on his collar, "and I'm going to impress on his hide the fact that my biscuits are for private circulation only."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Owsky," I said severely, for I didn't think he'd do that sort of thing—even though he is a foreigner. "Stealing is barred here, don't you know that?"

"It wasn't stealing," mumbled the criminal. "You do not understand at all——"

"I understand this," interrupted Blake. "That I came in here a moment ago and caught you pinching a dozen of my *café noirs* at least. Caught him in the act, Topsy! *Ipsa facto*, or whatever old Hulton terms it; and I think that's good enough for a lamming."

"Any defence, Owsky?" I asked. "British justice is the purest thing out, you know. Trot out your excuses, and we won't lather you till you've had your say."

"It is not stealing," the stubborn brute insisted. "I tell you there is no such thing. The matter is very simple: I have no biscuits left—he, Blake, has biscuits. I am hungry—I am a Socialist—I believe in sharing all our property equally. What more easy, then, than for me to take from his superfluous store? What more just?"

"Where did you learn all that bunkum from?" asked Blake.

"Where? Oh, but you are ignorant! It is the principle recognised by all free and independent minds. It is our glorious liberty! All men are equal! All goods are common to us all! You——"

He would have gone on with this rot for an hour if he'd been allowed. Luckily, just as he was getting into his second wind, the executioner cut in with the ash-plant and cold sense.

"Stow it, you young thief!" said he. "The trouble is that I'm not a Socialist, and don't believe for a fraction of a second that everything is common. Stealing is stealing, and you've scooped half my best biscuits. I wouldn't have minded if you'd gone for the stale cake. Ah! lie still there till I've finished with you!" and he laid on with a will.

As the ash-plant rose and fell with great regularity and excellent aim, Owsky's protests resounded through the study. I hate a noise, and having found out the cause of the tumult I took little interest in the closing scene. So I shut the door behind me and strolled down the passage towards the gym., pursued by the howls and threats of the culprit. He didn't seem to take at all kindly to the correcting rod. Blake has a good reach, you see, and plenty of muscle to back it up.

I didn't think anything more about the matter—who does about another fellow's licking?—until a couple of days later. The little incident of the biscuits was brought back to my mind when I ran across Owsky in the chemistry lab.

It was out of school hours, and I had only looked in to see if I could find a pal I'd lost sight of. To be strictly accurate, I was chasing him to recover a knife he'd bagged, and I thought he might have hidden in the lab. However, he wasn't there; the only person in sight was Owsky, mixing some mess in a mortar.

"Hullo, Owsky!" was my cheery greeting. "Busy? How's the society going? Freed any more countries lately?"

He only grunted—unless it was a foreign

swear—and tried to hide the mortar under his coat. That made me curious. I walked up a little closer and pulled open his coat.

"What are you making, old hoss?" I asked. "A poisoned draught to be sent to the Tsar as a birthday present?"

"It is nothing to do with you," replied the surly beast, trying to get away. "I am not interfering with your pleasures, do not interfere with mine. I have a perfect right to come here and amuse myself if I wish. You cannot interfere with my Rights!"

The fellow was always croaking about his beastly rights, just as if they were spelt with a capital. I got rather savage at that, and grabbed him by the arm.

"Hang your rights!" said I. "Tell me what you're messing about with up here. I've got my rights too—the rights of might, you jackass. Now, tell me at once!"

"I will not," was the only answer he gave me, so I began to put on the screw. What right had an alien to cheek a free-born British subject? None whatever, of course, and I twisted his arm a trifle—only a mild hint, you know—a foretaste of what was to come if he was obstinate.

"Let go," whined Owsky. "You are hurting me terribly!"

"Oh, no, I'm not," I said. "But I will—and a jolly sight more, too, if you don't own up."

Quite suddenly the little brute held out his other arm and shook the mortar at me.

"Look at this!" he cried. "If you don't let me go I will drop it, and—pouf! Good-bye!"

"All right—drop it! What's it going to do?"

"It will blow you up!" he answered, with a bloodthirsty and cheerful smile. I let go his arm—not from fright, of course; simply because I thought I'd punished him enough.

"You're joking," I said. "What are you going to do with that stuff? Is it gun-powder? Are you making fireworks?"

Owsky looked mysteriously round him:

"Can you keep a secret?" he whispered:

"Of course I can," I said; my curiosity for once was really roused. "I won't give it away."

"Will you swear that you will not tell anyone—any single soul, master or boy, if I confide my great secret to you? Your—what do you call it?—your bright honour—will you pledge it?"

"Honour bright, if that's what you

mean," I agreed, thinking he only was planning a Guy Fawkes show—it was getting near November 5th. "I promise not to give it away to a single person."

"Very good," said he. "I will explain to you. I am tired of words—now at last is the time for deeds! I have been trodden underfoot too long; soon will come my revenge!"

"I wish you'd talk sense and English," I complained. "What tack are you on? What are you trying to do?"

"Revenge on the tyrant! Revenge on Blake!"

"The old Admiral!" I said in surprise, for he is a most good-natured chap.

"Yes." He glanced around, and pointed to his mortar. "*This*—is for *him*!"

I began to feel a bit wheezy in the throat. Owsky's manner was too much like a nightmare for my nerves. I tell you, I didn't half like it.

"You don't mean to say you want to blow up the old bird?" I asked, feeling quite cold about the spinal column. "He's never done you any harm."

"He thrashed me the other day for a trifle. I have not forgotten—I never forget. I shall punish him—not too much—only a little. Only something like a blow-up! Only frighten him! No death—this time!"

"I'm glad to hear it, you bloodthirsty butcher," I said. "How are you going to work the oracle?"

Owsky produced a biscuit-box:

"You remember that he maltreated me for annexing some of his biscuits? Yes, I shall return the—the compliment, and frighten him by means of a biscuit-tin. I shall fill this with some gunpowder, and explode it under his bed!"

"But you'll kill the poor chap!" I said, aghast at the brute's idea.

"Oh, no, I shall not! I do not wish to get myself hung by your cruel laws. I shall only frighten him. Ha! This is what I shall do; I shall look over the side of his bed-box—what do you call it?"

"Cubicle."

"Yes—cubicle. I shall wake him up and say: 'There is a bomb beneath you! Your hours are numbered! Tremble, tyrant!' Then we shall see Mr. Blake in a fine fright! He will quiver and shake like a jelly! He will appear a fool!"

"Then you'll drive him out of his mind," I objected. "Hang it, man! A joke's a joke, but this is going a bit too far!"

"It will not hurt him—it will only frighten

him. No one will know except the boys, and they will not tell. I shall light a little train of gunpowder in my bed-box—it will run into his, and in turn light the biscuit-tin. There will be no bang—only a pouf and a smell! But Mr. Blake will imagine he is going to die. Ha, ha! It will cause much fun."

"Glad you think so," said I. "Has it ever struck you that you may set the place on fire?"

"I do not think it will. Besides, you have so many objections. We must leave something to chance."

"Well, I shall split to old Hulton," I answered, and I meant it. Of course, I hate sneaking, but what can you do with a foreign lunatic?

"Then you are not a gentleman," retorted Owsky. "Remember, you promised! Your sacred word! Your bright honour!"

"Oh, rats my bright honour!" said I uncomfortably. "I suppose I did. What did you make me promise for? Why did you tell me about the beastly thing you—you bomb-buster? I suppose I can't back out, now that I've promised not to give it away. When do you mean to do the trick?"

"To-night," smiled the villain. "I have made enough of the powder. I shall put it under his bed and lay the train before ten. All will be ready when we retire."

I left the bloodthirsty brute, feeling more sick than I've ever felt in my life. You see, I'd let myself into the most glorious mess an unfortunate chap could strike. Heartily I longed to go to old Hulton and tell him the whole story, but, somehow, I didn't think it was quite the game to break a promise—even when Owsky was mixed up in it.

On considering the matter now, I honestly believe Owsky didn't mean to damage the unfortunate Admiral, or even do him a slight bodily injury. I thought so then, and I still hold to my opinion. But, on the other hand, I had no sort of faith in his knowledge of chemistry and the manufacture of explosives.

It was more than likely that the fool would put in too much powder, or seal it up too tight. I knew enough about gunpowder to know that, if you pack it tight, it bangs, and if you strew it loose, it only burns.

As things looked at present it seemed extremely probable that the Admiral would be taken to the sanatorium in sections and a carpet-bag. Besides, my cubicle

was next door—— It was a disagreeable thought.

I pondered long and earnestly over the problem, and thought out many schemes. None of them seemed to fit the case. I came to the conclusion that I couldn't sneak, and yet must prevent the explosion. But how? It was no use thrashing Owsky till he promised to give up his cherished plan. His word was not to be trusted; also, if I stopped him now, he might try one of his bombs on me at a later date.

No, subtlety would have to be used; a deep and cunning plan must be laid, whereby Owsky would be shown up, given away, and generally trodden on. This must be caused by the criminal himself. And at the same time the unconscious Admiral must be protected. At last I hit on a scheme so simple that I wondered I hadn't thought of it earlier.

After tea was over I watched carefully until I saw Owsky stowed safely in his study with a book, and then I stole upstairs to our dormitory. No one was there—no one saw a form enter with stealthy tread. If they had, no one would have guessed that I was a saviour of society. I should probably have got a hundred lines for being there at all.

I went inside the Admiral's cubicle, and looked under the bed. Yes, there was the fateful biscuit-tin, with a little black train of gunpowder running to it, and out the other side to Owsky's abode.

I picked up the tin rather gingerly, and set it on the washstand to examine it: It was an ordinary, one-pound biscuit-tin, of the usual kind, but there was a hole punched in one side at the bottom. Very good.

With a palpitating heart and trembling fingers I lifted the lid, fully expecting to be blown to smithereens by the machine inside. Luckily, there was no machine. Owsky had excellent intentions, but no idea of mechanics. He couldn't have made a clockwork bomb to save his life. What he'd done was simply to fill the tin chock full of a lot of coarse gunpowder he'd made in the lab.

Literally, I shuddered as I inspected it: There was enough to have done for the poor old Admiral and half the fellows in the room at the same time. So much for Owsky's notion of a little fright! I thanked my stars he'd told me about it in time to check his kindly plans.

But there was no time to waste in thanks-

giving; at any moment he might return to investigate or give a final look round: If I were discovered, all would be lost: Deeds, not words, he had said, and deeds it was.

Grabbing the bottle of drinking-water, I poured a lot of it over the powder. It sucked it up like a sponge, and I added more until I thought there was enough. Then I clapped on the lid again, shoved the tin back under the bed in the corner, laid the train once more to the hole, and skedaddled:

After this heroic act I retired to Mother Tattersall's for some light refreshment before prep. I had had tea, but my exertions had given me a fresh appetite, and I managed to dispose of three girdle-cakes, two stone gingers, an ice, and three penn'orth of milk chocolate with ease.

It was a bit extravagant, but I felt that my evening's work thoroughly justified the laying out of the cash. And after my little banquet I was ready to face a dozen Owskys with bombs in their hands.

I shall now skip a few hours, and pass on to the eventful period of an eventful day: The time, you must understand, is about eleven-thirty—the time on which Owsky had fixed for his attempt. Owsky slept on one side of the Admiral, and I on the other: It was a night in November; but, oddly enough, there was no fog or rain, and the moon was shining brightly through the windows.

As we are shepherded to bed at nine-thirty, I had been undressed for a considerable time. Lights are put out at ten, and—officially—we are asleep a quarter of an hour later. But there was no sleep for me until I had seen the end of the play, tragedy or comedy, as it might turn out.

So, when I had crawled despondently into my pyjamas, I put on my dressing-gown, wrapped my rug well round me, and sat on my bed to await events.

Of course, I began to imagine all sorts of horrors in the interval, and ghost stories of appalling reality crowded into my mind: I wondered if I'd put enough water into the tin to damp the mixture; perhaps it hadn't reached the bottom! Perhaps it had dried up or evaporated by this time! Perhaps Owsky had found out that I'd doctored his machine, and had made a fresh one!

Perhaps—even supposing it *was* damp enough—the Admiral would be smothered by the fumes! Perhaps I should be tried and found guilty of being a something-after-the-fact! A lawyer friend of mine had

explained the law of murder to me the previous holidays, so I knew all about it; and my knowledge didn't add to my peace of mind.

A score of times I was on the point of rousing the old Admiral, or rushing to Hulton and confessing, but I always thought better of it. You see, in the first place I didn't want to break my word of honour, and in the second I calculated that a mild bust would do no harm and might show up the anarchist.

At last, after a period which nearly turned my hair grey with worry, half-past eleven boomed forth from the school clock. I heard a slight stir from Owsky's cubicle, and I shivered. To tell the truth, I was a bit jumpy in my nerves; but for the life of me I couldn't resist putting my chair on my bed, standing on it, and peering over to see what was taking place.

The moonlight showed everything as plain as possible, for there was a big skylight just overhead. And there, above the partition opposite to mine, I espied the head of Owsky looking at his intended victim. He saw me at once, and I relieved my feelings by shaking my fist at him. He grinned like a demon. For the beggar knew I wasn't going to give him away.

In his hand he held the top joint of a fishing-rod, and with this he gently stirred the sleeping form. It is curious, but I couldn't help smiling as I saw the Admiral roll over uneasily, and snore a bit louder. Owsky prodded him again, and the second dose was more effective.

"Gur—r—r—r," murmured the Admiral. "G'r—way."

"Blake!" said Owsky in an excited whisper. "Blake!"

The one addressed opened his eyes lazily:

"What's—matter?" he asked.

"Blake! There's a bomb under your bed!"

"Nons," grunted the stolid man: "Nons"—tell it—time was 'sleep. G'night."

"It's true!" whispered Owsky, giving

him another prod. "Quite true. It will blow you up! Oh, do wake up."

"You're trying—to pull—my leg," said the Admiral slowly. "If you don't shut up—I'll—lam you—in morning."

If you'll believe me, the old beggar turned over and went to sleep again—as cool as a cucumber, while I was in a cold perspiration of fear.

I could see that Owsky was mad with rage and disappointment; his face looked even more evil than before. And instead of stirring up the Admiral again, he got down quietly from his chair. I guessed he was going to set a light to the train, and then use the fishing-rod. I was simply chained to the spot.

I heard Owsky strike a match, and my heart thumped nineteen to the dozen, but at that precise moment the door opened—I dropped down, scuttled out of my dressing-gown and into bed, removed the chair and lay palpitating. I heard the voice of old Hulton begin:

"Owsky"—or whatever his name is—"in going round the changing-room, your boots—". And then there was a Ftz-z-z—pfr—oof! of the damp gunpowder. No noise to speak of, but the most appalling smell I've ever struck, and a cloud of smoke. That woke up the Admiral at last, and he tumbled out of his cubicle like a smoked-out wasp, spluttering and coughing; I lay and listened.

Hulton was somewhat taken aback, as you may imagine, but with great presence of mind he rushed into the Admiral's quarters, discovered the infernal machine, planked it into the basin and poured water over it.

When he had done this he interviewed the owner, and soon found that, at any rate *he* wasn't responsible. You can bet he soon found out who *was*, for the ass Owsky had leapt into bed without taking off his dressing-gown!

Owsky was led away then and there to Hulton's study, and you know it's impossible to pad with a copy-book when you're only wearing a night-shirt!



The Card Dealer.

By ALICE and CLAUDE ASKEW.

A story with a most unexpected ending.

SHE thought it would be amusing—something to talk about afterwards—and also she was a girl always ready for any wild jest, even to that of personating an absentee fortune-teller at a bazaar, and saving the situation.

“For everybody is counting on that woman with her cards,” so Lady Moresby, who had been responsible for getting up the bazaar, declared with a shake of her head; “and if someone isn’t in the little red and yellow tent ready to delude silly people I am sure the whole affair will be a failure.”

So she had said to her godchild, Joyce Meredith, with a shrug of her ample shoulders, a wave of her be-ringed and carefully manicured hands. And then suddenly a bright idea had struck Lady Moresby.

“Why shouldn’t *you* dress up and play the part, Joyce?” she had exclaimed, with some animation. “You pretend to tell fortunes yourself, you know. You could disguise your voice, dear, and wear a little velvet mask, and who could recognise you? Joyce darling, you must really be an angel and help me out of an awkward hole. I can’t imagine why I ever wanted to get up a wretched bazaar, and most of all for primitive blacks, who, I dare say, won’t be a bit pleased with the missionary sent out to them.”

Lady Moresby clasped her hands as she ended her long speech, and looked at Joyce beseechingly.

“You really might, darling,” she added—“you really might.”

Joyce smiled, and her black eyes twinkled: She was exceedingly fond of her plump, good-natured godmother, and the idea of playing the part of fortune-teller at this local bazaar tempted her.

Lady Moresby lived in the Manor house of a sleepy, old-fashioned Sussex village, and the bazaar was to be held in the Manor house grounds. It was an invitation one, and would only be attended by the county families; and Joyce, who often came down to

stay with her godmother, knew enough of the history and position of Lady Moresby’s friends and acquaintances to feel pretty certain that she would make a successful hit as a fortune-teller. Also she was learned in the meaning of the cards, and had once or twice made curiously successful divinations; but Joyce laughed at her own powers as a witch, though sometimes she had been a little startled when certain wild predictions had fulfilled themselves.

“Don’t worry, Lady Moresby!” she now cried cheerfully, an arch smile lighting up her piquante, pretty little face. “I’ll be a gipsy for the occasion. Dress me up in picturesque garments, shroud me with a mask, and I’ll scare the people pretty well out of their wits. But you must promise never, never to let out the truth, or to give me away afterwards.”

“Of course, I wouldn’t!” exclaimed Lady Moresby with conviction. “Why, people might think I had been getting their money out of them by fraud. For, of course, you are not the real thing, Joyce, dear.”

She smiled at her goddaughter complacently, and Joyce smiled and twinkled back.

And so it came to pass, through the sudden decision of Madame Cartini, the well-known Bond Street clairvoyant, that it would not be worth her while to go down to Sussex after all, even for the comfortable fee Lady Moresby had promised, that Joyce—dressed in the conventional gipsy costume, specially hired for the occasion, and wearing the daintiest of little black velvet masks—stood in the doorway of the red and yellow tent, a captivating and charming little figure, the daintiest and most enticing of witches. In fact, Joyce looked so charming that Lady Moresby, who would have made a good business woman, promptly decided to double the fortune-teller’s charges.

“For I am sure the men, at any rate, will

want to hear all you have got to tell them," she smiled. "You make a perfectly bewitching gipsy."

"I believe I do," answered Joyce. "Even though I have to wear a silly little mask!"

She laughed as she spoke, fully aware of the charms of her neat, round little figure, slight ankles and slim feet. Also her chin looked round and dimpled under the velvet mask, and she wore her really beautiful black hair flowing loose over her shoulders, simply confined by a little cap of glittering sequins.

She wished for the second, as she surveyed her image in the glass, that someone could be there to see her, someone whom she had not seen for many a weary week, a man she had met in London that season, a man she wanted to meet again.

People kept trooping up, and Joyce had her hands full. She soon had to say that she couldn't allow anyone more than a ten-minutes' fortune—that was when they began to stand in a long queue outside the tent, just like "pitites" at a theatre.

Joyce thoroughly enjoyed herself. She spread out the cards for the people she knew so intimately, and with whose history she was so well acquainted, and told their fortunes with a rare discretion, astonishing and startling some of the good folk nearly out of their wits by her intimate knowledge of their affairs.

It was a glorious opportunity for mischief-making, but Joyce was too good-humoured a little person to play the part of a malicious fay. Instead, she gave wise and sensible advice, and was instrumental at least in one case in patching up a quarrel which had existed for years between two neighbours.

In matters of the heart she was especially discreet and guarded. It was the gipsy's characterisation and knowledge of the past which was so wonderful, people told themselves afterwards. She was a little vague and indefinite about the future, they thought, though liberal in her promises of happy years, days free from disease; fortune, and legacies.

All at once, just as Joyce was getting a little tired, the faintest degree weary, the blood rushed to her cheeks under her little mask, and her heart began to beat and flutter painfully.

She had caught sight of the man of whom she had been thinking as she stood before the mirror that morning—the man she had wanted to see so badly.

He had come over in a motor, so she learnt from overhearing what he said to a friend as he joined the ranks of those waiting to have their fortunes told, come over with his hostess and her house-party from quite a distant part of the county, and, having come, found the bazaar beastly slow, and thought he would have his fortune told just to pass the time.

Joyce shivered and trembled. She had not realised till this moment how much she cared, and she felt sick and giddy.

She hurried matters shamefully for the next twenty minutes, hardly allowing her clients five minutes each, and her remarks were short and jerky. She swept up the cards with nervous, impatient fingers, and talked wild nonsense. The people who had been told how wonderful the gipsy girl was, left the tent with disapproval and disappointment writ large on their faces, some of them coming to the conclusion that she must be played out, others calling her a silly little impostor:

Then he came in, and Joyce's heart gave a wild leap, and her voice when she asked him to sit down and cut the cards was just a little unsteady.

The man sat down: He was tall and broad-shouldered, the sort of healthy, clean-living man any girl might have fallen in love with. Also he had plenty of money and his full share of brains, but it was not for that that Joyce loved him—it was just for his big, strong self.

"I expect you are rather tired, aren't you?" he said kindly, noticing the trembling of the little fortune-teller's hands and the quivering of the red mouth under the black mask.

Joyce shook her head. She was horribly afraid that her voice might betray her. She had disguised it well enough with other people, but could she disguise it with him?

"Will you cut the cards three times, and shuffle them?" she asked in a low tone; "and cut with your left hand, please."

She did not know what she was going to say when he had cut them, only somehow she felt it would be impossible to make up stories to him, or talk of things she knew: She must tell him the real meaning of the cards, the candid truth—that is, if she had sense enough to remember what the cards meant.

He cut the ten of hearts, the ace of hearts, and the spade queen. Joyce's heart beat rapidly, for she always called herself queen

of spades in cards, because of her dark hair and eyes.

"There's your wish," she said, "facing you. A change of residence, and a dark woman—a girl. Are you fond of her?"

She asked the question timidly, wondering at herself for her daring, but somehow the words had to come.

"A dark girl," answered the man slowly, knitting his brows a little. "I am awfully good friends with a dark girl; she is a dear little person, and I saw a lot of her in town last season. But she wouldn't be concerned with my wish. We are simply friends—good friends."

Joyce's heart grew quite cold for the moment, and then it began to ache—to ache—to ache. She felt very weary, and would have given worlds to be able to cry. But she cut the cards and began sorting them with a steady resolution, and then as she laid them out and arrayed them in long rows, a curious knowledge of what they meant came home to her, and she read the bits of painted pasteboard like a book.

"There's a girl," she said slowly—"a fair girl, and you love her dearly." She pointed out the queen of diamonds. Her fingers didn't tremble now, but they were as cold as ice.

"That's true enough, little fortune-teller," the man answered slowly. "I love a fair girl—but what you have to find out is if she loves me. That's the crux of the whole matter, isn't it?"

Joyce bent her head over the cards. For a second they swam before her. And then—why, then she might have been gazing into a mirror. She could never understand afterwards what really had happened. Had she yielded herself up to her strong imagination, or had she suddenly been gifted with the power of vision? She couldn't tell, she didn't know, but, for a few moments at any rate, calm little everyday Joyce Meredith found herself possessing all the weird powers of an Eastern sybil, able to describe minutely, even to the shading of her hair and her long, tapering fingers, a girl she had never seen and a girl she never wanted to see.

She was constrained, too, to tell the man who hung over her, listening to her words, gazing at her in awed astonishment, that he must speak to this girl at once if he wanted to win her, for there was someone else who loved her, someone for whom she did not care much herself, but might marry if the other did not come forward soon.

"For she cares for you," Joyce said steadily, raising her eyes and looking him in the face. "She loves you in her pretty, placid way, but not as the dark girl does."

"Never mind the dark girl," interrupted the man hurriedly. "Tell me more about her."

Joyce told him more, told him, with a knowledge she could not explain or understand, that the fair girl had come to the bazaar with him, and was even now mooning round the stalls, a little annoyed by his apparent desertion, not realising in the least that he had been afraid of boring her too much with his company.

"And if you are wise you will go and find her now," Joyce said slowly, though every word was a fine torture to pronounce. "You will go straight out and tell her that you love her, and she will smile up at you in her soft, pretty way, and blush all over her delicate, fair face. I suppose you will give her an engagement-ring—turquoises and diamonds, perhaps. She would like turquoises. And later on there will be a big wedding at St. George's, and then—why, then you will live happily ever after, I suppose."

And here, for all her efforts after self-control, Joyce's voice suddenly failed her, and she bowed her dark head down upon the cards and began to weep silently and softly.

The man watched the heaving of her shoulders and, for all the passionate exhilaration and hope which her prophecy had aroused, felt oddly distressed and dismayed, strangely pitiful for the little fortune-teller, the card-dealer, whose dark eyes he seemed to know so well, and yet whom he had never met before and was never likely to meet again.

He was glad that they were in a tent by themselves, and that the yellow and red curtains were closely drawn, for he would not have liked anyone to witness the gipsy's tears. She had touched his heart in a quaint way; she was so small, so tenderly, pathetically small, and such a pretty little thing.

"Poor little woman, you are worn out," he said gently. "The strain of telling fortunes must be awful, for upon my soul I believe you are inspired, or else your cards are bewitched."

He laid his hand tentatively on the girl's shoulder. He would have liked to soothe her just as if she had been a child.

His touch recalled Joyce to herself. She sprang back, nearly upsetting the card-table, then laughed a little unsteadily.

"I am tired," she confessed. "Fortune-telling takes more out of one than people think; and for the moment I felt—oh, stupid and silly. But please go out now," she added, "for there are hosts of people waiting for their fortunes to be told. I think I gave you rather an extra long one."

She was standing up, her calm, collected little self by now, and what did it matter how pale her cheeks were since she wore a mask?

"I'll go—I'll go at once!" murmured the man penitently. Then he turned to the card dealer and took her hands in his. How cold they were, those little hands!

"I am going to her, straight to her, as you advised me," he whispered, "and if it is all right, well, you will hear from me."

He smiled, his big, honest smile, but Joyce shivered. She didn't want to hear from him—she didn't want to see him again, all she wanted to do now was to forget—forget. She felt as if the world had suddenly gone wrong; grown cold and grey.

She did hear from him again, though, for later on when the long, weary afternoon had pretty well come to its close, and the bazaar was nearly over—when the Moorish silver bowl by her side was full of gold and silver, the money she had earned for the charity, earned, as Joyce felt, in rather a dubious manner—a letter was brought the little card dealer, a letter directed to the

fortune-teller in a handwriting she knew quite well.

She took the envelope mechanically from the small boy who had brought it—a smart and rosetted little bazaar helper; then, when she was alone in the tent, she opened it.

Two bank notes fell out, and a sheet of paper on which a few lines were scrawled:—

"You were quite right, absolutely, splendidly right, dear little fortune-teller," so he had written. "She is going to marry me, and everything feels grand. I am inclosing two ten-pound bank notes, for I want you to buy yourself that turquoise and diamond-ring you spoke of. She has chosen pearls as it happens. Please accept the only way I have of saying thank you."

Joyce tore the note up into little fragments, tiny scraps of paper—then she slipped the bank notes into the silver bowl which stood on the card-table.

* * * *

"You made more than anyone else at the bazaar, dear," so Lady Moresby informed Joyce with a smile a few hours later. "And I am simply delighted with you and the success of your fortune-telling. But how on earth did you manage to wheedle ten-pound bank notes out of anyone, Joyce? That's what I want to know, dear."

She asked the question curiously.

"I let the cards speak," answered the card dealer slowly; "and, as it happened, they told the truth!"

* * A DREAM OF LIBERTY. * *

BY H. ALEXANDER:

*The while fierce hate all sleep dispels,
He schemes, and seems to see
A mighty host march forth to fight
For him and liberty.*

*He sees the glorious cavalry
On prancing chargers pass,
With spearheads gleaming in the sun,
And casques of burnished brass.*

*He hears himself, their general, shout;
"Good friends, we are oppressed
With heavy tasks. To-morrow's dawn
Shall rid us of this pest.*

*"The Tyrant has, by cruel deeds,
Made life a burden sore.
Do ye, then, with each other vie
Our foe's blood to outpour."*

*The morrow broke. Where were the troops?
Why stayed the battle-cry?
Why did the plain not ring with clash
Of steel on steel? Ah! Why?*

*The General was but six years old,
And still lay in his bed;
The Tyrant was his governess,
The soldiers made of lead.*

Romances of the Road. ❀ ❀

English poetry and prose can yield an inexhaustible toll of the Romance of the Road. The greatest writers and thinkers have dwelt upon its subtle fascination, its pathos, and pleasure. In this series—in reality a collection of complete short stories—tales of travel and the road are re-told in the form of extracts from the classics.

A JOURNEY FROM SYDNEY TO THE BUSH.

❀ ❀ From "*Babes in the Bush*," by ROLF BOLDREWOOD.

(Published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd.)

Rolf Boldrewood's stirring novel of Australian Bush life records the adventures of an English family named Effingham, who emigrate to Australia, owing to pecuniary losses.

An old friend of Mr. Effingham, named Harley Stenworth, persuades him to invest his remaining capital of £3000 in an estate called Warbrook Chase, 200 miles from Sydney, and when the family arrive at Sydney, they are met by Mr. Stenworth, who travels with them to Warbrook. As there are no railways and no coaches, the journey is made in a horse waggon, provided with a tent for the night, and the following account of the trip is most interesting, as giving a vivid picture of Australian life in the early thirties.

The travelers consist of Mr. and Mrs. Effingham, their children, and two faithful Scotch retainers of the Effinghams, named Andrew and Jeanie, accompanied by Daisy, the cow, and several dogs. They are driven by Dick Evans, a driver well acquainted with the country.

THE ex-coachman drove them at a lively pace, but steadily, along a macadamised turnpike road, not so very different from a country lane in Surrey, though wider, and not confined by hedges.

The day was fine. On either side, after the town was left behind, were large inclosures wherein grazed sheep, cattle and horses. Sometimes they passed an orangery, and the girls were charmed with the rows of dark green trees, upon which the golden fruit was ripe. Then an old-fashioned house, in an orchard, surrounded by a wall—wall and house coloured red, and rusty with the stains of age—much like a farmhouse in Hertfordshire. One town they passed was so manifestly old-fashioned, having even ruins, to their delight and astonishment, that they could hardly believe they were in a new country.

"Someone has been playing Rip Van Winkle tricks upon us," said Rosamund. "We have been asleep a hundred years, and are come back finding all things grown old and in decay."

"You must not forget that the Colony has been established nearly fifty years," said Mr. Stenworth, "and that these are some

of the earliest settlements. They were not always placed in the most judicious sites; wherefore, as newer towns have passed them in the race for trade, these have submitted to become as you see them, 'grey with the grime of years,' and simulating decay as well as circumstances will permit."

"Well, I think much more highly of Australia, now that I have seen a *real* ruin or two," said Annabel decisively. "I have always pictured the country full of hideous houses of boards, painted white, with spinach-green doors and windows."

The afternoon was well advanced as the inmates of the carriage descried the encampment which Mr. Evans had ordered, with some assistance from his military experience. So complete in all arrangements for comfort was it—not wholly disregarding the element of romantic scenery—that the girls cried aloud in admiration:

The streamlet (or creek) which afforded the needful water meandered round the base of a crag, jutting out from a forest-clothed hill. The water-hole (or basin) in the channel of the creek was larger than such generally are, and reflected brightly the rays of the declining sun. The meadow

which afforded space for the encampment was green, and fertile of appearance. The waggon stood near the water; the four horses were peacefully grazing.

At a short distance, under a spreading tree, the tent had been pitched, while before it was a wood fire, upon which Jeanie was cooking something appetising. Wilfred and his brother were strolling, gun in hand, up the creek; the cow was feeding among the rushes with great contentment; Andrew was seated, meditating, upon a box which he had brought forth from the recesses of the waggon, while Dick Evans, not far from a small fire, upon which stood a camp-kettle at boiling point, was smoking with an air of conscious pride, as if not only the picturesque beauty, but the personages pertaining to the landscape, belonged to him individually.

"I could not leave you more comfortably provided for," said the "guide, philosopher and friend." "Old Dick may be trusted in all such matters as implicitly as the Duke of Wellington. I never knew him at fault yet in this kind of life."

"You must positively stay and have afternoon tea with us," exclaimed Annabel. "It is exactly five, and there is Dick putting a tin cupful into the teapot. What extravagant people you colonists are! I never drank tea in the open air before, but it seems quite the right thing to do. I see Jeanie has made griddle-cakes like a dear old thing. And I know there is butter. I am so hungry. You *will* stay, won't you?"

"I think, sir," said the ex-family coachman, looking indulgently at the special pleader, "that we shall have time to get back to the 'Red Cow' Inn to-night, after a cup of tea, as the young lady wishes it. I'll run you into town bright and early to-morrow."

"Very well, then, Miss Annabel, I shall have the honour to accept your invitation," bowed the old man. "I go away more cheerfully than I expected, now that I leave you all so comparatively snug. It will not be for long. Be sure that I shall meet you on the threshold of Warbrook."

The *al fresco* meal was partaken of with much relish, even gaiety, after which civilisation—as personified by the reverend gentlemen and the carriage—departed. Annabel looked after it ruefully, while Jeanie and Mrs. Effingham took counsel together for the night. It was for the first time in the family history,

Never before had the Effinghams slept, so to speak, in the open air. It was a novel adventure in their uneventful lives—a marked commencement of their colonial career. It affected them differently, according to their idiosyncrasies. Rosamund was calmly resolute, Annabel apprehensive, and Beatrice indifferent; the boys in high spirits; Mr. Effingham half in disapproval, despondently self-accusing; while Mrs. Effingham and Jeanie were so fully absorbed in the great bedding question that they had no emotions to spare for any abstract consideration whatever.

The moon, in her second quarter, had arisen lustrous in the pure, dark blue firmament, fire-besprinkled with "patines of bright gold," before this important matter (and supper) was concluded. Then it was formally announced that the tent was fully furnished, and had turned out wonderfully commodious.

The mattresses were placed upon a layer of "bush-feathers," as Dick Evans called them, and which (the small twigs and leaf-shoots of the eucalyptus) he had impressed Wilfred and his brother to gather. There was a lantern secured to the tent-pole, which lighted up the apartment, and sheets, blankets, coverlets being brought forth, Annabel declared that she was sure they would all sleep like tops, that for her part she must insist on going to bed at once, as the keen air had made her quite drowsy.

A dressing-table had been improvised, chiefly with the aid of Mr. Evans' mechanical skill. When the matron and her daughters made their farewell for the night, and closed their canvas portal, everyone was of the opinion that a high degree of comfort and effective lodging had been reached. : :

The chief personages having retired, Mr. Effingham and his sons essayed to make their couch under the waggon.

"It is many a year since I had any experience in this kind of thing," said he. "But if I remember rightly, it was in Spain that I bivouacked last. This locality is not unlike Estramadura. That rocky ravine, with the track running down it, is just where you would have expected to see the muleteer stepping gaily along beside his mules, singing or swearing, as the case might be; and they do both with great vigour." . . .

Between the keen air of the forest and the unwonted exercise, a tendency to drowsiness now set in, which Mr. Effingham and his sons discovered by the time that the blankets were drawn over them. The sides of their

apartment, represented by the wheels of the waggon, were covered by the canvas tilt, the ceiling was low, but sufficient. It was the ideal chamber in one respect. Ventilation was unimpeded, while shelter was secured.

When Wilfred awoke from the deep, untroubled slumber, the sun seemed gazing at the encampment with haughty, fixed regard as of a monarch enthroned upon the summit of the purple mountain range.

Unwitting of the lengths (fortunately) to which the unsparing archer could go in Southern lands, he essayed to commence dressing.

Rising hurriedly, he was reminded by a tap on the head from the axle-tree that he was in a bedroom of restricted accommodation. More guarded in his after-movements he crawled outside, first placing on the dewy grass a rug upon which to stand. He commenced his toilet, and cast a comprehensive glance around.

The first thing he saw was the upright form of Richard Evans, who, returning from a search after his hobbled horses, drove them before him towards the camp, at the same time smoking his pipe with a serene and satisfied air. The morning was chilly, but he had not thought a coat necessary, and in a check shirt and moleskin trousers calmly braved an atmosphere not much above forty degrees Fahrenheit.

"This must be a fine climate," said Wilfred to his father; "we shall be well wrapped up till breakfast-time at any rate, and yet that old buffer is wandering about in his shirt-sleeves as if he were in Naples."

"He is pretty hard-bitten, you may depend," said Mr. Effingham. "I think some of our old 'die-hards' are as tough samples of humanity as could anywhere be met. I do not uphold the British soldier as a model, but they were men in my time, beyond any manner of doubt."

Dick marched up his team to the waggon, whence the lodgers had by this time issued—Andrew to make a fire near the tent, and Jeanie to penetrate that sacred inclosure, and presumably to act as tire-woman in the interior.

The shafts, which had served Dick as a sleeping apartment during the night, aided by a shroud of tarpaulin, were uplifted, and bagging being thereon stretched, were converted into a manger for the chaff and maize, which the horses quickly commenced to consume.

Presently Jeanie issued from the tent, and finding the camp-kettle boiling, proceeded to make tea. Andrew, in the meantime, milked the cow. The gridiron was brought into requisition and certain mutton chops broiled. Eventually Mrs. Effingham and her daughters issued from the tent, fresh and dainty of aspect, as if they had just left their bedrooms at The Chase. Then the day commenced, and also breakfast. : : :

Grilled chops, smoking cups of tea, with bread and butter, constituted the repast. Worse meals have been eaten. The appetites were, like the travelers, highly respectable. By the time the meal was finished, Mr. Richard Evans had harnessed his team, and bringing himself up to the attitude of "attention," requested to know when the ladies would like to make a start.

After consultation it was notified to their guide and courier that as soon as the tent was struck and the baggage packed everyone would be ready.

The troops being in high health and spirits, in a comparatively short space of time the march was resumed. Wilfred and Guy walked ahead, fowling-piece in hand. Andrew drove the cow, which followed quietly in the rear. The coupled greyhounds looked eagerly around, as if sensible that they were now in a hunting country. They were with difficulty restrained when a wallaby, in two bounds, crossed the road, and disappeared in an adjoining scrub. : : :

As the waggon rolled easily along, the horses stepping cheerily on the track, the wayfarers paced over the unwonted herbage with an alertness of mien which would have suggested a very different history.

"How lovely the shrubs are that we see in all directions," said Mrs. Effingham. "What should we have given for that golden flowering mimosa at The Chase, or this blue-leaved, pink-pointed tree, which I suppose must be a young eucalyptus. Here they are so common that no one heeds them, and yet there are rare plants enough to set up a dozen greenhouses."

"Everything is so utterly different," said Rosamund. "I am most agreeably surprised at the landscape. What erroneous ideas one has of far countries! I suppose it is because we seldom feel sufficient interest to learn about them thoroughly. I pictured Australia a sandy waste, with burnt-up, reedy grass, and a general air of the desert. Now, here we have woods,

a pretty little brook rippling by rocks and hills, and in the distance a mountain. I could make quite an effective sketch."

"The country isn't all like this, miss," said Dick Evans with a deferential air. "If you was to go two or three hundred miles into the Bush, there's no timber at all; you'd find it all sand and saltbushes—the curiosest place ever you see."

"How can it be the 'Bush,'" inquired Wilfred, "if there are no trees? But we are not going so far, at any rate."

"Finest grazin' land out," said Richard the experienced. "All the stock rolling fat—no trouble in looking after 'em. If I was a young gentleman, that's the place I'd make for. Not but what Warbrook's a pleasant spot, and maybe the young ladies will like it better than the plains."

"I fancy we shall, Richard," said Rosamund. "The plains may be very well for sheep and cattle, but I prefer a woodland country like this. I suppose we can have a garden there?"

"Used to be the best garden in all the country-side, miss, but the Warleighs were a wild lot; they let everything go to wrack. The trees and bushes is mostly wore out, but the sile's that good, as a handy man would soon make it ship-shape again."

"What are we to do for lunch?" said Annabel, with some appearance of anxiety. "If we are to go on roaming over the land from sunrise to sunset without stopping, I shall die of hunger—I'm sure I shall. I keep thinking about those cakes of Jeanie's."

"My dear child," said her mother, "I daresay we shall manage to feed you and the rest of the flock. I am pleased to find that you have such a famous appetite. To be sure, you have not stopped growing, and this fresh air acts as a tonic. So far, we must not complain of the climate."

"It's only a few miles further on to the King Parrot Waterhole, where we can stop in the middle of the day, and have a bit to eat if the young ladies is sharp-set. I always stop on the road and feed my horses about twelve o'clock. And if the young gentlemen was to walk on, they might shoot a pair of ducks at the waterhole, as would come in handy for the pot."

When about mid-day they reached the King Parrot Waterhole, a reed-fringed pool, about as large as their English horseponds, they found Wilfred in possession of a pair of the beautiful grey-breasted wood-ducks (*Amas Boscha*), a teal, with chestnut and

black feathers, and a brilliant green neck, also a dark-furred kangaroo, which Dick pronounced to be a rock wallaby. : : :

At mid-day the kettle bubbled on the fire, kindled by the ever-ready Richard, cakes and sandwiches were handed round, the tea—thanks to Daisy—was gratefully sipped.

The sun shone brightly on the green flat, where the horses grazed in peace and plenty. The birds chirped and called at intervals; all Nature seemed glad and responsive to the joyous season of the southern spring.

Thus their days wore on, in peaceful progression, alike free from toil, anxiety or adventure. The daily stage was accomplished under Dick's experienced direction without mistake or misadventure. The evening meal was a time of rest and cheerful enjoyment, the night's slumbers refreshing and unbroken.

"What a delightful country this is! I feel quite a new creature, especially after breakfast," exclaimed Annabel one morning. "I could go on like this for months, till we reach the other side of the continent, if there is any other side. Will it be as nice as this, I wonder, at Malbrook, or Warbrook, or whatever they call it? Warbrook Chase won't look so bad on our letters when we write home. I must send a sketch of it to cousin Elizabeth—with a bark cabin, of course. She will never believe that we have a real house to live in among the backwoods. What sort of a house is it, Dick? Is it thatched and gabled, and damp and delightful, with dear little diamond casements like the keeper's lodge, or is it a horrid wooden barn? Tell me now, there's a dear old man!"

"We shall be there, miss, the day after to-morrow, please God," responded Dick with respectful solemnity. "Parson Stenworth said I was to say nought about the place, but let it come on you suddint-like. And I'm a man as is used to obey orders."

"Very well, you disagreeable old soldier," said the playful maiden, "I'll be even with you and the parson, as you call him. See if I don't."

"Sorry to disobleeege you, Miss Anniebell," said the veteran, "but if my old General, Sir Hugh Gough, was to come and say: 'Corporal Richard Evans, hand me over the chart of the country,' I should have to tell him that he hadn't got the counter-sign."

"And quite right, too, Evans," interposed Mr. Effingham, "to keep up your good old

habits in a new country. Discipline is the soul of the Army."

"I was allers taught *that*, sir," replied Dick, with an air of military reminiscence which would have benefited a veteran of the Great Frederick. "But when we reaches Warbrook my agreement's out with the parson, and miss can order me about all day."

In spite of Annabel's asseverations that the party would never reach the spot indicated, and that she believed there never was any such place, but that Dick would

lead them into a trackless forest and abandon them, the journey ended about the time specified. A rugged track, indeed, one afternoon tried their patience. The horses laboured, the docile cow limped and lagged, the girls complained, while Andrew's countenance visibly elongated.

At length Dick Evans' wooden facial muscles relaxed, as, halting on the hardly-gained hill-top, he pointed with his whip-handle, saying simply: "There's Warbrook! So the young ladies and gentlemen can see for themselves!"

THE FIGHT WITH THE SHE-BEAR. * *

From "*The Cloister and the Hearth*," by CHARLES READE.

(Published by Chatto & Windus.)

Charles Reade's famous story, "*The Cloister and the Hearth*" was published in 1861: It was its author's greatest work, and is certainly one of the finest historical novels ever written. Sir Walter Besant once said of it: "To me it is a picture of the past more faithful than anything in the works of Scott. As one reads it one feels in the very atmosphere of the century."

The hero, Gerard Eliassoen, who is in love with Margaret, the heroine, is on his travels from Holland, en route for Rome. He meets with a French soldier named Denys, who is on his way to France, and they journey together. The following incident, easily detachable as a cameo from the book, relates one of their adventures on the road, and is one of the most stirring and vividly-written episodes in fiction.

ONE day, being in a forest a few leagues from Dusseldorf, as Gerard was walking like one in a dream, thinking of Margaret, and scarce seeing the road he trode, his companion laid a hand on his shoulder, and strung his crossbow with glittering eye.

"Hush!" said he, in a low whisper that startled Gerard more than thunder.

Gerard grasped his axe tight, and shook a little; he heard a rustling in the wood hard by, and at the same moment Denys sprang into the wood, and his crossbow went to his shoulder, even as he jumped.

Twang! went the metal string, and after an instant's suspense he roared: "Run forward, guard the road, he is hit! He is hit!"

Gerard darted forward, and as he ran a young bear burst out of the wood right upon him; finding itself intercepted, it went upon its hind legs with a snarl, and though not half-grown, opened formidable jaws and long claws. Gerard, in a fury of excitement and agitation, flung himself on it, and delivered a tremendous blow on its nose with his axe, and the creature

staggered; another, and it lay grovelling, with Gerard hacking it.

"Hallo, stop! You are mad to spoil the meat."

"I took it for a robber," said Gerard, panting. "I mean I had made ready for a robber, so I could not hold my hand."

"Ay, these chattering travelers have stuffed your head full of thieves and assassins; they have not got a real live robber in their whole nation. Nay, I'll carry the beast; bear thou my crossbow."

"We will carry it by turns then," said Gerard, "for 'tis a heavy load. Poor thing, how its blood drips! Why did we slay it?"

"For supper and the reward the bailie of the next town shall give us."

"And for that it must die, when it had but just begun to live; and perchance it hath a mother that will miss it sore this night, and loves it as ours love us; more than mine does me."

"What, know you not that his mother was caught in a pitfall last month, and her skin is now at the tanner's, and his father was stuck full of cloth-yard shafts t'other

day, and died like Julius Cæsar, with his hands folded on his bosom and a dead dog in each of them?"

But Gerard would not view it jestingly. "Why, then," said he, "we have killed one of God's creatures that was all alone in the world—as I am this day, in this strange land."

"You young milksop," roared Denys, "these things must not be looked at so, or not another bow would be drawn, nor quarrel fly in forest or battlefield. Why, one of your kidney consorting with a troop of pikemen should turn them to a row of milk-pails; it is ended; to Rome thou goest not alone, for never wouldst thou reach the Alps in a whole skin. I take thee to Remiremont, my native place, and there I marry thee to my young sister, she is as blooming as a peach. Thou shakest thy head? Ah! I forgot; thou lovest elsewhere, and art a one woman man, a creature to me scarce conceivable."

"Well, then, I shall find thee, not a wife, nor a leman, but a friend; some honest Burgundian, who shall go with thee as far as Lyons; and much I doubt that honest fellow will be myself, into whose liquor thou hast dropped sundry powders to make me love thee; for erst I endured not doves in doublet and hose. From Lyons, I say, I can trust thee by ship to Italy, which being by all accounts the very stronghold of milksops, thou wilt there be safe; they will hear thy words, and make thee their duke in a twinkling."

Gerard sighed.

"In sooth, I love not to think of this Dusseldorf, where we are to part company, good friend."

They walked silently, each thinking of the separation at hand; the thought checked trifling conversation, and at those moments it is a relief to do something, however insignificant. Gerard asked Denys to lend him a bolt. "I have often shot with a long bow, but never with one of these."

"Draw thy knife and cut this one out of the cub," said Denys slyly.

"Nay, nay, I want a clean one."

Denys gave him three out of his quiver:

Gerard strung the bow, and leveled it at a bough that had fallen into the road at some distance. The power of the instrument surprised him; the short but thick steel bow jarred him to the very heel as it went off, and the swift steel shaft was invisible in its passage; only the dead leaves,

with which November had carpeted the narrow road, flew about on the other side of the bough.

"Ye aimed a thought too high," said Denys.

"What a deadly thing! No wonder it is driving out the long bow—to Martin's, much discontent."

"Ay, lad," said Denys triumphantly. "It gains ground every day, in spite of their laws and their proclamations to keep up the yewen bow, because forsooth their grandsires shot with it, knowing no better. You see, Gerard, war is not a pastime. Men will shoot at their enemies with the hittingest arm and the killingest, not with the longest and missingest."

"Then these new engines I hear of will put both bows down; for these with a pinch of black dust, and a leaden ball, and a child's finger, shall slay you Mars and Goliath, and the Seven Champions."

"Pooh! Pooh!" said Denys warmly, "petrone nor harquebuss shall ever put down Sir Arbalest. Why, we can shoot ten times while they are putting their charcoal and their lead into their leathern smoke belchers, and then kindling their matches: All that is too fumbling for the field of battle; there a soldier's weapon needs be aye ready, like his heart."

Gerard did not answer, for his ear was attracted by a sound behind them. It was a peculiar sound, too, like something heavy, but not hard, rushing softly over the dead leaves. He turned round with some little curiosity. A colossal creature was coming down the road at about sixty paces distance.

He looked at it in a sort of calm stupor at first, but the next moment he turned ashy pale.

"Denys," he cried. "Oh, God! Denys!"

Denys whirled round:

It was a bear as big as a cart-horse.

It was tearing along with its huge head down, running on a hot scent.

The very moment he saw it Denys said in a sickening whisper:

"The cub!"

Oh, the concentrated horror of that one word, whispered hoarsely, with dilating eyes! For in that syllable it all flashed upon them both like a sudden stroke of lightning in the dark—the bloody trail, the murdered cub, the mother upon them, and it. Death!

All this in a moment of time. The next

she saw them. Huge as she was, she seemed to double herself (it was her long hair bristling with rage); she raised her head, big as a bull's, her swine-shaped jaws wide at them, her eyes turned to blood and flame, and she rushed upon them, scattering the leaves about her like a whirlwind as she came.

"Shoot!" screamed Denys, but Gerard stood shaking from head to foot, useless.

"Shoot, man! Ten thousand devils, shoot! Too late! Tree! Tree!" and he dropped the cub, pushed Gerard across the road, and flew to the first tree and climbed it, Gerard the same on his side; and as they fled, both men uttered inhuman howls, like savage creatures grazed by death.

With all their speed, one or other would have been torn to fragments at the foot of his tree; but the bear stopped a moment at the cub.

Without taking her bloodshot eyes off those she was hunting, she smelt it all round and found, how her Creator only knows, that it was dead, quite dead. She gave a yell such as neither of the hunted ones had ever heard, nor dreamt to be in Nature, and flew after Denys. She reared and struck at him as he climbed. He was just out of reach.

Instantly she seized the tree, and with her huge teeth tore a great piece out of it with a crash. Then she reared again, dug her claws deep into the bark, and began to mount it slowly, but as surely as a monkey.

Denys' evil star had led him to a dead tree, a mere shaft, and of no very great height. He climbed faster than his pursuer, and was soon at the top. He looked this way and that for some bough of another tree to spring to. There was none, and if he jumped down, he knew the bear would be upon him ere he could recover the fall, and make short work of him. Moreover, Denys was little used to turning his back on danger, and his blood was rising at being hunted. He turned to bay.

"My hour is come," thought he. "Let me meet death like a man." He knelt down and grasped a small shoot to steady himself, drew his long knife, and clenching his teeth, prepared to jab the huge brute as soon as it should mount within reach.

Of this combat the result was not doubtful. The monster's head and neck were scarce vulnerable for bone and masses of hair. The man was going to sting the bear, and the bear to crack the man like a nut.

Gerard's heart was better than his nerves:

He saw his friend's mortal danger, and passed at once from fear to blindish rage. He slipped down his tree in a moment, caught up the crossbow, which he had dropped in the road, and running furiously up, sent a bolt into the bear's body with a loud shout. The bear gave a snarl of rage and pain, and turned its head irresolutely.

"Keep aloof!" cried Denys, "or you are a dead man."

"I care not," and in a moment he had another bolt ready, and shot it fiercely into the bear, screaming: "Take that! Take that!"

Denys poured a volley of oaths down at him.

"Get away, idiot!"

He was right, the bear, finding so formidable and noisy a foe behind him, slipped growling down the tree, rending deep furrows in it as she slipped. Gerard ran back to his tree and climbed it swiftly. But while his legs were dangling some eight feet from the ground, the bear came rearing and struck with her forepaw, and out flew a piece of bloody cloth from Gerard's hose.

He climbed, and climbed; and presently he heard as it were in the air a voice say: "Go out on the bough!" He looked, and there was a long, massive branch before him shooting upwards at a slight angle. He threw his body across it, and, by a series of convulsive efforts, worked up it to the end.

Then he looked round panting.

The bear was mounting the tree on the other side. He heard her claws scrape, and saw her bulge on both sides of the massive tree. Her eyes not being very quick, she reached the fork and passed it, mounting the main stem. Gerard drew breath more freely. The bear either heard him, or found by scent she was wrong; she paused; presently she caught sight of him. She eyed him steadily; then quietly descended to the fork.

Slowly and cautiously she stretched out a paw and tried the bough. It was a stiff oak branch, sound as iron. Instinct taught the creature this; it crawled carefully out on the bough, growling savagely as it came.

Gerard looked wildly down. He was forty feet from the ground. Death below. Death moving slow but sure on him in a still more horrible form. His hair bristled. The sweat poured from him. He sat helpless, fascinated, tongue-tied.

As the fearful monster crawled growling towards him, incongruous thoughts coursed

through his mind. Margaret: the Vulgate, where it speaks of the rage of a she-bear robbed of her whelps—Rome—Eternity.

The bear crawled on. And now the stupor of death fell on the doomed man; he saw the open jaws and bloodshot eyes coming, but in a mist.

As in a mist he heard a twang; he glanced down; Denys, white and silent as death, was shooting up at the bear. The bear snarled at the twang, but crawled on.

Again the cross-bow twanged and the bear snarled, and came nearer. Again the cross-bow twanged, and the next moment the bear was close upon Gerard, where he sat, with hair standing stiff on end, and eyes starting from their sockets, palsied.

The bear opened her jaws like a grave, and hot blood spouted from them upon Gerard as from a pump. The bough rocked. The wounded monster was reeling; it clung, it stuck its sickles of claws deep into the wood; it toppled, its claws held firm, but its body rolled off, and the sudden shock to the branch shook Gerard forward on his stomach with his face upon one of the bear's straining paws.

At this, by a convulsive effort, she raised

her head up, up, till he felt her hot, fetid breath. Then huge teeth snapped together loudly close below him in the air, with a last effort of baffled hate.

The ponderous carcase rent the claws out of the bough, then pounded the earth with a tremendous thump. There was a shout of triumph below, and the very next instant a cry of dismay, for Gerard had swooned, and without an attempt to save himself, rolled headlong from the perilous height.

Denys caught at Gerard, and somewhat checked his fall; but it may be doubted whether this alone would have saved him from breaking his neck, or a limb. His best friend now was the dying bear, on whose hairy carcase his head and shoulders descended. Denys tore him off her. It was needless.

She panted still, and her limbs quivered, but a hare was not so harmless, and soon she breathed her last, and the judicious Denys propped Gerard up against her, being soft, and fanned him. He came to by degrees, but confused, and feeling the bear all around him, rolled away, yelling.

"Courage," cried Denys, "*le diable est mort.*"

✻ ✻ ✻ *DADDY'S DARLING.* ✻ ✻ ✻

BY R. B. HARLOCK.

*When the firelight flickers brightly,
Casting shadows all around,
Who is that who comes on tip-toe,
Creeping up with scarce a sound?
Whose small fingers, soft caressing,
Steal around my old arm-chair?
Whose sweet voice calls from the darkness:
"Tell me, Daddy dear, who's there?"*

*Who is that so eager always,
For a fairy tale or rhyme;
Never tired of gnomes and giants
Till the warning quarters chime?
Who then pleads a few more moments,
As the fatal hour draws near,
Begging with such sweet persistence:
"One more story, Daddy dear?"*

*Who is that who, tired and sleepy,
Curls all ruffled, cheeks aglow;
Lingers still, with goblin fairies,
Eager all their ways to know?
Who is that whom strong arms carry,
Feeling scarce the burden light;
Who is that who whispers softly:
"Kiss me, Daddy dear, good night?"*

*Who is that so snugly lying,
In her little snow-white bed;
Far away in Dreamland roaming,
By the fairy princes led?
Who is that who smiles so sweetly,
At some gorgeous elfin scene?
Who, but someone's priceless treasure—
Daddy's little Baby Queen.*

The Vanished Steamer. ❁ ❁

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ By SINGLETON CAREW.

Being the story of the startling mystery that lay behind a newspaper paragraph.

OUT OF THE NIGHT.

ONE morning, not many months ago, a diligent reader of the daily papers would have found, tucked away among the Home news, the following modest little paragraph :

A MISSING STEAMER.

No news has yet come to hand respecting the missing steamship *Mirella*, which disappeared on her maiden voyage from the Clyde to Belfast, where she was to be handed over to her owners. The vessel is now eleven days overdue, and her fate has given rise to much speculation, seeing that the voyage was a short one and along a route usually thronged with shipping. No wreckage of any kind has been picked up, and no incoming vessel has reported a collision.

The shipping papers, needless to say, gave the matter somewhat greater prominence, pointing out the strangeness of the case and the remarkable fact that a new two-thousand-ton steamer, on a one-day trip, in calm weather, could disappear utterly, without leaving a trace behind, in such a busy ocean highway as the Irish Channel. But nothing came of their speculations. The ship was finally posted at Lloyd's as "Missing," the insurance money was paid over to the owners, the sorrowing relations of those on board went into mourning, and another case was added to the lengthy list of ocean mysteries.

The mystery of the *Mirella*, however, was destined to be solved—and in a startling and dramatic fashion, seeing that her disappearance was part of one of the most amazing and audacious criminal coups ever conceived. And here is the story of it :

In a cosily-furnished room in a villa situated just outside Liverpool sat four men. One, the eldest—a man with a bronzed, strongly-marked face and deep-set, flashing eyes—had about him the indefinable air that clings to the quarter-deck seaman. The others, faultlessly dressed all three, looked like men of the world—that world where money-making

is the one objective, and where men are not too particular how it is made.

Presently the sea-captain spoke, leaning over the table impressively.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "it's time we compared notes. Everything is ready for the first big move. Twerton here reports that the *Mirella* leaves Greenock on Wednesday. She will be manned by a scratch crew—a dozen at the outside. For my part, the yacht lies in the Mersey, with stores and everything on board. I've got fourteen men who, I think, will serve our purpose so long as they are not told too much."

"And when shall we sail, Vince ?" asked one of the men, a dark, sallow-faced fellow with shifty eyes.

"To-morrow," answered Vince slowly: "I want to meet the *Mirella* about here"—he tapped a spot on a chart which lay before him—"and we mustn't fall in with her till after dark. It's the chance of a lifetime ; we mustn't throw it away."

* * * * *

Plugging steadily along through the night came the steamship *Mirella*, bound from Greenock to Belfast. That day she had been finally passed by her builders as ready for sea, and she was now on her way to be handed over to her owners. She was a fine vessel, of some two thousand odd tons, and the man on her bridge sighed to himself as he gazed ahead, wishing himself her permanent captain instead of an out-of-work skipper engaged for the "run."

Down below in the engine-room, however, was the happiest man alive—or at least he fancied himself so. This was Fred Shaw, the young engineer. The owners had asked his firm for a thoroughly reliable man to act as chief engineer of the new steamer, and they had recommended him. Moreover, on the strength of his new position, he had

asked sweet Maisie Conyers to be his wife, and she had shyly consented to wed him at the end of his first voyage.

Suddenly the telegraph in front of him rang sharply. His eyes flew to the dial, noting the signal "Ease Her." As he reached for the lever there came another ring, and the pointer moved to "Half Speed," "Half Speed Astern," and finally, "Stop Her."

"What the dickens is up?" was his mental comment, as he brought the throbbing engines to rest. "What's Helmes stopping in mid-Channel for?"

Some time went by, and no further signal reached him, the ship drifting idly on the calm sea. Then, suddenly, there came to the young engineer's ears the muffled sound of a pistol-shot somewhere overhead, followed by a dull shout.

"Good Heavens! What's wrong?" cried Shaw. He turned to one of the startled men behind him:

"Just take charge here a minute," he said. "I'm going on deck."

Three steps at a time he skipped up the steep ladder, but just as his hand touched the iron door at the top it was slammed violently in his face, and he heard the bolt outside being shot home:

"What on earth is going on?" he gasped, leaning against the door in utter bewilderment.

From where he stood he could hear a confused murmur of voices—voices altogether strange to him. Then he detected a new sound—the throbbing of engines, growing gradually louder and louder, till at length there came a dull jar which told his practised ears that another vessel was alongside the *Mirella*.

With increasing astonishment he heard the tramping of feet, the thumping of coal-bags, and the creaking of one of the forward derricks as something heavy was swung in and lowered to the deck.

"There's something wrong!" he muttered again, pushing fruitlessly at the closed door. "What on earth can it be?"

Finally, after what seemed an age, the listener detected a sound he knew well—the blowing-off of steam close alongside.

"Are we going to tow someone?" he asked himself. "If not, why are they getting rid of their steam? Hang it all! Will nobody ever come?"

In his exasperation he kicked the iron door again and again, but no notice was taken, and at last he desisted:

Suddenly, with another jar, the strange vessel that had for so long been rubbing against the *Mirella*'s side fell away, for the chafing sound stopped. Fred was just asking himself, for the dozenth time, why he had been caged there, when the telegraph tinkled sharply. With a start he leapt below. "Full Speed Ahead" indicated the pointer, and in another minute the *Mirella* was forging along at fifteen knots, with a hopelessly-puzzled and angry young engineer on her footplates.

"Guv'nor," said one of the greasers presently, "wot's 'e changed 'er course for? We ain't headin' for Belfast."

"Changed her course?" echoed Shaw sharply. "What do you mean?"

"What I say, sir," answered the man: Between his oily fingers he held up a watch-chain compass. "See 'ere, sir," he continued. "Afore we stopped we was runnin' west-sou'-west—the proper course for Belfast. Now"—he steadied the little instrument for a moment—"we're goin' south-east. We're leavin' Belfast behind, sir."

Fred Shaw gazed at the tell-tale needle with startled eyes.

"You're right," he said huskily. "And someone has fastened us in! Give me a hammer; I'll break the door down. There's some confounded mystery here!"

As he spoke the telephone whistle blew: Quickly the perturbed officer put his ear to the pipe:

"I want the engineer on deck at once," said an unfamiliar voice.

Without comment, save the stereotyped, "Aye, aye, sir!" Shaw strode up the ladder: The door was thrown open as he reached it, a bright light flashed into his dazzled eyes, and he felt the muzzle of a revolver at his forehead.

"Quick march!" growled a voice: "And no tricks, or you're a dead man!"

■ ■ ■

THE SECRET OF THE VOYAGE.

FOR an instant Shaw felt inclined to resist, but a second man seized his elbows from behind, and he deemed it wise to yield.

Without a word his captors conducted him along the deck to the chart-room: Inside sat four men, all strangers to Fred: They surveyed him keenly as his guards ranged themselves on either side.

"What does this mean?" the engineer burst out angrily. "Who are you, and where is Captain Helmes?"

A bronzed man of seafaring appearance answered him, with a sneering smile on his face.

"You haven't got the hang of things yet, I see," he said coolly. "I will be frank with you. We are now the owners of this steamer, young man, and I am her skipper. Captain Helmes has—er—has met with an accident."

Shaw sprang forward, jerking his surprised guards after him.

"It's a lie!" he snapped. "You've killed him, you scoundrels! What do you want on board here?"

The brown-faced man smiled again, though there was an ugly gleam in his eyes.

"Just you be more polite," he said curtly. "It will pay you. If you must know, your late skipper, being an obstinate fool, got in the way of a bullet, and went overboard. This ship now belongs to this little syndicate here. That's all you'll need to know. And now listen to me. We have sent for you to know whether you will continue to act as engineer of the ship, taking your orders from us. You shall receive your present rate of pay, whatever it is, and a bonus at the end of the voyage. Do you consent?"

The engineer heard him out with growing horror. Who were these men who had appeared so strangely out of the night and who talked so coolly of murder?

"Act as your engineer!" he flashed. "Good Heavens, no! I'll see you hanged for this night's work, you ruffians!"

A murmur went round the table, and the leader frowned.

"I told you to be civil," he said. "You don't seem to realise your position. Refuse to work for us, and that man beside you shall blow your brains out where you stand! You fool! do you think we are playing a game? Come now, which is it to be? I give you my word, if you take the job, you will receive your pay and a thumping bonus. Otherwise you'll follow your friend Helmes, or whatever his name was. I give you a minute to consider."

Fred realised that he was in the power of absolutely unscrupulous men. Then he thought of Maisie—blue-eyed Maisie—and his resolution weakened. "If I refuse I lose my life and don't save the ship," he told himself. "I'll consent, but only to gain time. The brutes!"

"Very well," he said slowly. "I'll act as your engineer. Where are we going?"

"You will know in good time," answered

the spokesman of the party. "I'm glad you've become reasonable. And, look here, young man. Don't get asking any questions. Serve me well, and I'll treat you well, but if I find you monkeying round after information, or trying to work on the cross, I'll shoot you like a dog!"

* * * *

Southwards and ever southwards forged the *Mirella*, though that was no longer her name. One day when Shaw came on deck for a mouthful of fresh air he found the dozen hairy ruffians his new employers had brought with them hard at work disguising the vessel, and within two days the metamorphosis was complete. A dummy funnel was reared beside the real one, spars were crossed on the foremast, and the ship and her boats were painted white. Last, but by no means least, the steamer's name had been changed to *La Tosca*, and she flew an ensign which Fred dimly remembered as that of some obscure South American republic.

Apart from the terrible uncertainty of his position, the young engineer had but little to complain of. All his men had accepted the change of masters—under the same compulsion as himself, and they were but little interfered with.

Shaw berthed and messed by himself, exchanging as little conversation as possible with the four conspirators, who spent most of their time in the saloon, with the exception of Captain Vince, who did the navigation work.

Once or twice the ship put into obscure ports to obtain coal; then she plunged away across the Indian Ocean, until Shaw guessed that her destination must be Australia.

He was sitting in his cabin one day, sick at heart with anxiety, when one of his fitters put his head round the door. Then he laid a grimy finger on his lips, tip-toed inside, and locked the door, Shaw eyeing him with growing amazement.

"What's the matter, Trueman?" he asked.

"Hush!" breathed the man agitatedly: "Whisper, sir, for the love of Heaven! Do ye know what this voyage is about?"

"I wish I did, Trueman," answered Fred sadly. "I'd give ten years of my life to know."

"I've found out, sir!" the mechanic burst out excitedly. "I've found out, and I'll whisper it to ye. But we must keep it to ourselves, or we're all dead men!"

He perched himself on a box, and, leaning forward, breathed into Fred's ear a startling story.

"This mornin', sir," he began, "the bo'sun called me up to do a job in one of the staterooms. I was just tinkerin' with it, with the door locked so's I could smoke my pipe in peace, when I 'eard voices from the saloon, next door. It was the four head fellers a-talkin'. Well, sir, I disremember a lot they said, but I 'eard enough to understand the main drift of things. We're goin' to hang about the steamer track south of Australia, sir, till one o' the liners comes along. Them four have found out that this is about the time o' year when the biggest cargoes of bullion are shipped to London. They hope to catch one of two steamers—Blue Cross boats—each of which is expected to have on board over eight 'undred thousand pounds' worth o' gold. They are goin' to stop the liner some'ow, make 'em give up the gold, and then bury it somewheres on the Australian coast till the hue-and-cry is over!"

"Good Heavens!" said Fred hoarsely. "But what about us?"

Trueman shuddered.

"You and us, sir," he said, "are to be wiped out directly there is no further need for us! The ship's to be scuttled in deep water, an' the gold taken ashore in the boats, which are then to be destroyed. Oh! they've got everything cut an' dried, the brutes! There's a quick-firin' gun in the hold to be used if the liner cuts up rusty."

"The fiends!" groaned Fred, with a cold perspiration on his brow. "They're pirates, then! But we must stop it, Trueman; we must baulk them."

"I'm ready to try, sir, I'm sure," answered the mechanic. "But 'ow's it to be done?"

"I'll try to think of something," said Fred, running his fingers through his hair somewhat hopelessly. "If we're to be murdered anyway, we may as well take a few risks to thwart the villains. But don't say a word to anyone else, Trueman; for the present you and I must keep the secret."

■ ■ ■

THE LOOTING OF THE LINER.

THINGS fell out according to the plans which Trueman had overheard, and ere long the steamer was zig-zagging the seas at half-speed—obviously waiting and watching for something. Fred noticed with horror that a mysterious object, care-

fully screened with canvas, had been erected upon the fore-hatch. Too well he knew what it was—a quick-firing gun to be used to bring the captain of the treasure-ship to his senses in the event of resistance!

Just about this time an unlucky accident befell the young engineer. He was supervising some repairs one day when he slipped on a greasy rag and burnt himself severely against a red-hot plate. The pain was well-nigh unendurable, and Vince gruffly ordered him to his cabin.

"One of your men can manage to run her till you're better," he said. "You'll be out of mischief there, too!"

Fred lay in his stuffy bunk, with his head and arm bandaged, gazing out of the open port over the sunlit sea. He was thinking sadly of little Maisie, and wondering if he should ever see her again. No doubt she thought him dead. Dead! The word brought with it a fresh train of ideas—he was as good as dead, unless at the eleventh hour some unlooked-for accident happened. So far as he could see, the four conspirators had provided for everything; a master-mind had worked out all the details.

Suddenly a shout above brought the young engineer back to the realities of his position.

"She's a four-masted steamer," said Vince's voice, apparently from the end of the bridge. "Eureka! It's her! Get that ensign up, union down, and warn the men. Twerton, my boy, the next half hour settles it!"

Shaw groaned impotently. Evidently the liner was approaching, all unconscious of this lurking pirate, and helpless as any galleon of old. Oh! to be able to outwit his task-masters!

Gazing with straining eyes from his port-hole, he saw the great liner in the distance—a stately, four-funneled steamer many times the size of the *Mirella*. As he looked she caught sight of the pirate's cunning distress-signal, and altered her course. Steadily she drew nearer, till Fred could see the passengers crowding curiously to her rails, and the gold-laced officers on her bridge. She stopped her engines as she drew close, drifting slowly past the motionless *Mirella*.

"What ship is that?" roared the liner's captain through his megaphone. "What is amiss with you?"

The reply was startling.

"I want the gold in your strong-room!" bellowed Vince.

From his peephole Shaw saw the captain of the liner start.

"I've no time for foolery!" he shouted curtly. "Do you want any assistance?"

"I want that gold," answered Vince again; "and if you don't give it up, I'll blow you out of the water!"

The passengers began to look frightened, but the commander evidently thought he had to deal with a madman.

"I shall report you, sir," he bawled indignantly, and his hand moved towards the engine-room telegraph.

"Drop that, you fool!" cried Vince, now in deadly earnest. "This is no joke. Can you see that gun on my fore-deck? Get up that gold at once, or I'll drop a shell among your passengers."

"You'll interfere with the Royal Mail at your peril," snapped the liner's commander, though Shaw could see that his face looked anxious. He walked to the telegraph and rang for his engines to restart.

"Fire!" roared Vince passionately, and with a thrill of horror Fred heard the gun boom out and felt the shock of its discharge. Straight through the plating of the saloon went the screeching shell, and shrill cries of terror came from the frightened throng on deck.

"Will you obey me now, or must I riddle you?" bawled Vince.

The officer looked around him despairingly, then he rang off his engines.

"You shall pay for this!" he shouted. "What is it you want?"

"The gold in your strong-room," answered Vince. "Send it over at once in your boats, and don't try any tricks, or there'll be some holes in your passenger-list."

Fuming with rage and grief, but compelled to yield for the sake of his passengers, the commander gave the necessary orders. In an hour's time the whole of the gold, to the value of over £900,000, had been transferred to the *Mirella*, the cases being received at the gangway by armed seamen.

When the exchange was complete the triumphant Vince waved the liner captain a mocking farewell.

"You shall pay dear for this outrage!" shouted the officer; "I'll get you strung up for this, as sure—"

"Steady now, skipper!" retorted Vince. "I've half a mind to sink you lock, stock and barrel, so keep a civil tongue in your head. Long before you can report me we shall be safely away. Pleasant voyage, skipper!"

And he rang for full speed ahead, leaving the liner captain half-dazed with grief and impotent fury upon his bridge.

"What will he do?" asked a voice above.

"I neither know nor care," answered Vince. "He can't very well put back—he carries the mails; and he's not likely to meet anything to report us to yet awhile. We're safe enough, Twerton, my boy. Can you realise it yet? Nine hundred thousand golden sovereigns to divide!"

Down in his cabin Fred Shaw gazed from his porthole with unseeing eyes.

"The deed is done!" he muttered. "Now comes the last act of the drama. If I'm going to do anything, I must do it now, or it will be too late. What *can* I do?"

He buried his face in his hands half-maddened by his helplessness.

When he looked up a new light blazed in his eyes.

"I'll beat them yet!" he muttered. "I'll beat them, if it costs me my life. We're in the track of incoming ships, and the robbery will be reported as soon as possible. I'll disable the engines!"

■ ■ ■

LIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS.

THROUGH his ally, Trueman, the engineer sent for each man of the scanty engine-room complement in turn, and told them of the fate that was in store for them directly their efforts had brought the pirate steamer to the point off the Australian coast where Vince and his accomplices intended to scuttle her. To each man Shaw put the same question—would he assist him to delay the ship's flight and so endeavour to thwart the murderous rascals above?

"Every hour we can keep her in the steamer track increases our chance of saving our lives," the young engineer told them. And one and all they vowed to help him through thick and thin; the imminence of their own peril stirred them as nothing else would have done.

As a result, not two hours afterwards the measured pulsations of the engines grew suddenly erratic, faltered, and finally stopped altogether, leaving the vessel rocking helplessly on the swell.

Vince flew to the telephone with an oath, and demanded to know what was amiss.

In a somewhat shaky voice the man who was acting as Shaw's deputy told him that the engines had broken down.

Fuming with rage, Vince rushed off to Shaw's cabin, bursting in unceremoniously. "Those curs below say the engines have broken down," he snarled. "Go down and see what's wrong. If you don't get way on her again within an hour someone's going to be shot!"

Without a word the young engineer rose to his feet and slowly and painfully climbed down to the footplates, Vince hard at his heels.

"What's gone wrong, Stevens?" asked Shaw, though he knew quite well. Glibly the man answered him, with a host of technical details that were quite unintelligible to the frantic Vince.

"Hang your starboard cylinder cover!" he snapped angrily. "I'll give you an hour to put the thing right; if she isn't moving at the end of that time I shall shoot the man who was in charge. Do you think I'm going to have everything spoilt at the last minute by your infernal blundering?"

He hurried away on deck again, and a moment later they heard him giving orders for the vessel's scanty canvas to be hoisted.

"What shall we do, sir?" murmured the engineer's assistant. "The brute means what he says about the shooting."

"Let her drift for fifty minutes," answered Fred. "Then put the parts back and give her quarter-speed. They're in our hands if we can only disarm their suspicions."

Shaw's instructions were duly carried out. After much hammering from the engine-room the steamer began to move ahead again, although very slowly, and the perturbed conspirators breathed more easily.

During the whole of the next day the steamer edged away northward, but thanks to the occasional stoppages necessitated by the mysterious repairs on which the engineering staff was engaged, she had not got very far when night fell, and Vince swore that if more speed were not available on the morrow he would shoot a couple of men to encourage the others.

Shaw lay in his bunk that night, wondering how much longer the suspense would last. He had done his best to keep the ship back, but apparently all in vain.

Suddenly the ill-favoured bo'sun put his head in at the door.

"Dowse that bloomin' light," he growled; "and don't light it again till ye're given leave. Skipper's orders."

Mechanically Fred extinguished the lamp, and the scowling fellow retreated.

"What's that for?" the engineer asked himself. "Has Vince sighted something he's afraid of?"

The thought sent him out of his bunk with a bound, and in a moment he had sprung to the port and was gazing eagerly out across the black waters. A glance along the ship's hull showed him that every light had been extinguished; the vessel was slipping along at quarter-speed as noiselessly as a phantom. But what had caused Vince to take this precaution?

Ah! Away ahead, some miles distant, he caught the gleam of lights. A ship was moving steadily along on a course almost parallel with their own, but in the opposite direction. It was too dark to make out her hull, but the arrangements of the lamps told Shaw's experienced eye that she was none other than a warship—probably a cruiser of the Australian Squadron. Vince was evidently afraid of her, and was hoping to slip by unnoticed in the gloom.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Shaw. "If only they knew on board that cruiser! In another half hour she will have passed us—they'll never detect us a night like this."

His helplessness in the presence of succour maddened him. Then, like a flash, an idea came to him.

"If it works, we're saved," he muttered. "If it fails, I shall have given myself away entirely. I'll risk it!"

Noiselessly he opened his cabin door and peeped out. There was no one in sight; the whole ship was wrapped in darkness. Cautiously he tip-toed along the alley-way till he came to the little door leading to the engine-room. Opening it, he passed within, beckoning to the startled Stevens.

"Stevens," he whispered excitedly. "There's a warship passing—I'm going to try to signal to her. If you hear me fire my revolver six times in succession, stop your engines, barricade yourselves in here, and defend yourselves till the bluejackets come. If you don't hear the six shots I shall have failed."

Before the amazed man could ask a question Shaw had vanished as silently as he had come.

Once back in his cabin, Fred locked and bolted the door, piling his sea-chest and every available piece of furniture against it. He laid his revolver handy on a shelf; then he lit the lamp with a shaking hand,

covering it with a cloth to hide the light. Next he stole a look at the warship. She was appreciably nearer, and coming along very fast, but the engineer noticed that Vince, though afraid to make any decided alteration in his course, was yet edging gradually away from her.

With his pulses throbbing Shaw stood there in the darkened cabin, longing to carry out his desperate scheme, yet afraid to ruin it irretrievably by precipitate action.

At last he could stand the suspense no longer; the cruiser was as near as she was likely to be, and he could hear the far-away throbbing of her mighty engines distinctly.

Noiselessly he threw open the port, adjusted the cloth round his lamp so that one bright beam only came from it; then with hands that trembled with excitement he turned the beam in the direction of the cruiser, taking care that no tell-tale reflection struck the waves.

Fortunately for his scheme, Shaw was thoroughly conversant with the dot-and-dash Morse system of light-signaling, universally used by night at sea. Now, with a piece of cardboard for a screen, he commenced to flash a pregnant message through the darkness—surely as strange a message as was ever transmitted by such means!

"*Stop us, for Heaven's sake!*" he spelt out. "*Pirates on board with prisoners and stolen gold.*"

The message completed, he signaled it again and again, with straining eyes fixed on those unanswering lights before him.

Would they *never* see the signal? Would the warship pass by unheeding?

Sick at heart, he went through the message again.

"*Stop us, for Heaven's sake! Pirates on board with—*"

Suddenly a fierce oath somewhere above startled him.

"What's that light below there?" hissed Vince's voice. "Thousand demons! It's in the engineer's cabin; the dog's been signaling! Get below, some of you, and wipe him out; he's done us!"

There came a rush of feet along the corridor, and Fred gripped his revolver with a grim smile on his pale face.

"They haven't seen me!" he groaned. "This is the end!"

Heavy blows rained upon the barricaded

door, and fierce voices called upon him to open. He glanced once more through the port, in time to see a beam of blinding radiance sweep from the cruiser's side, focussed full upon the steamer. Then, with a hoarse chuckle, he thrust his revolver through the port and fired six times in succession, just as a sail was flung over the side, blotting out the porthole entirely.

Still the men outside attacked the door, till it began to give way under their onslaughts. But Fred cared nothing now; the cruiser had seen his signal, and the shooting would rouse her suspicions. Even as he reloaded his pistol the *Mirella's* engines stopped, and he knew that Stevens had carried out his orders.

"I'm coming aboard you. Don't try to run, or the cruiser will shell you. We've been looking for you since yesterday."

Shaw heard the clear, authoritative voice like one in a dream. He heard the rattle of oars, the clink of steel; then a measured tramping on the deck. The men outside his door slunk away, and Fred set to work to remove his barricades. Just as he turned the key someone knocked outside:

"Open in the King's name," said a voice. "We're friends."

He stumbled out half-fainting and gripped the hand of a dapper lieutenant.

* * * *

Everyone knows how the affair ended, and what a sensation the trial of the pirates caused. Vince and Twerton were hanged for the murder of Captain Helmes and three of the liner's passengers who were killed by the shell. The rest of the gang received extremely heavy sentences.

Fred Shaw, needless to say, found himself the idol of the hour. The story of his despairing signal was told in every newspaper in Australia, and his photograph was in all the shops.

But, better far, from his point of view, were the three things that happened after he reached home again. Firstly, the underwriters presented him with a thumping cheque for his services in saving the *Mirella* and the vast treasure of the liner; secondly, the delighted owners of the latter vessel offered him a chief engineer's berth in their newest steamship; and thirdly—and best of all—sweet little Maisie threw off her mourning, crying and laughing by turns, and promised to marry him there and then.

Books in Brief. * * *

The gist of a novel in the form of a short story—this is our idea of a popular review. This month we have chosen the Baroness Orczy's "The Scarlet Pimpernel," a story which has proved marvellously successful both as a book and as a play, and Maxwell Gray's "The Great Refusal," a story which everyone who read her most famous work "The Silence of Dean Maitland," will wish to peruse.

THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL. * * *

* * * By the *BARONESS ORCZY*.

(Greening & Co. Ltd. 6s.)

I.

IT was the time of the French Revolution in 1792. Daily, hourly, the guillotine claimed its many victims. The aristocrats had to hide for their lives. Few escaped, save with the help of a band of Englishmen headed by that meddlesome man known as "The Scarlet Pimpernel," who contrived means of rescue that were truly wonderful.

When an aristocrat escaped to England, the Committee of Public Safety generally received a scrap of paper informing them of the fact. The paper was always signed with a device drawn in red—a little star-shaped flower called the scarlet pimpernel. The Committee offered large rewards for the capture of the impudent Englishman, and, failing to succeed, deputed Chauvelin, one of their most zealous agents, to discover his identity.

Chauvelin, in disguise, occupied quarters at "The Fisherman's Rest," at Dover, thinking it to be a likely place to obtain news of The Scarlet Pimpernel. One evening he sat in a corner of the public room, for he had received news that some most prominent aristocrats, the Comtesse de Tournay and her two children, had escaped the guillotine through the agency of The Scarlet Pimpernel's band.

The Comtesse and her children were escorted to "The Fisherman's Rest" by two well-known Englishmen, Lord Antony Dewhurst and Sir Andrew Ffoulkes. Sir Percy Blakeney and his wife were also expected at "The Fisherman's Rest."

After the refugees had supped, the Comtesse de Tournay chatted with Lord Antony: "Frenchwomen have been very

bitter against us. There was that woman, Marguerite St. Just. She denounced the Marquis de St. Cyr and all his family to the Tribunal of the Terror. She was a leading actress of the Comédie Française and married Sir Percy Blakeney."

She did not explain that Marguerite's brother had fallen in love with St. Cyr's daughter, and that the indignant old aristocrat had had St. Just thrashed by his servants. Marguerite (now Lady Blakeney), smarting under the terrible insult to her brother, happened to hear that the St. Cyrs were in treasonable correspondence with Austria, and uttered a few thoughtless words which resulted in their downfall.

II.

ASTUTE though he was, Chauvelin little thought that The Scarlet Pimpernel was Sir Percy Blakeney, who, under the guise of extreme foppishness, had disarmed suspicion for so long, and amused himself by rescuing aristocrats right under Chauvelin's long nose. Lady Blakeney worshiped her husband, whose love for her had suddenly changed from passionate devotion to well-bred indifference, owing to his having heard the story of her betrayal of the St. Cyrs. She was too proud to explain the full truth, and also to let him see how much she loved him, and he was too proud to tell her why he had ceased to love her.

After weeks of patient spying, Chauvelin's opportunity came at last, for, through his means, Lady Blakeney was the unconscious instrument of sending her husband to his own undoing. Chauvelin's one object in life was to lure The Scarlet Pimpernel

back to France, and then make an end of him. Little Suzannede Tournay revealed the truth to Lady Blakeney. "We have no fear now," she said. "The noble, yet unknown, Scarlet Pimpernel, has gone to Paris himself to save papa. He will be in Calais to-morrow, and bring him back to us."

"Percy! Her husband had gone!" Lady Blakeney understood now the part he had played—the mask he wore in order to throw dust in everyone's eyes. She must follow him to Calais and save him. She rushed off to Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, who was known to be one of The Scarlet Pimpernel's followers, and he at once agreed to go with her in search of Sir Percy.

III.

WHEN Lady Blakeney and Sir Andrew Ffoulkes landed at Calais, they proceeded towards Cape Gris Nez, where they reached a little inn, "The Chat Gris," which was a favourite haunt of Sir Percy on his expeditions, but he was not there.

The surly innkeeper informed them, however, that a tall English aristocrat had been there, had gone out to order a cart, and would return for supper.

After the landlord had left the room, Ffoulkes told Lady Blakeney that he had seen Chauvelin, disguised as a *curé*, on the beach at Dover. "He has probably followed us, and Blakeney will not leave until he meets the fugitives for whom he has come—the old Comte de Tournay and others. If we don't warn Percy, Chauvelin will catch him. I'll go and search for him."

Lady Blakeney hid in the loft to await Ffoulkes' return. Presently Chauvelin, disguised as a *curé*, and accompanied by his factotum, Degas, arrived.

As Lady Blakeney, sick with horror, listened to Chauvelin's directions to Degas, his plan for the capture of Sir Percy became appallingly clear. Chauvelin wished that the fleeing Comte de Tournay and his friends should be left for a little while in false security until Sir Percy joined them. Then The Scarlet Pimpernel would be caught red-handed.

Soon after Degas had gone away, Sir Percy entered the inn dressed as for a ball. To Lady Blakeney's astonishment, he walked up to the *curé* and clapped him on the back: "Odds fish! : : : M. Chauvelin. : : I vow I never thought of meeting you here."

Chauvelin fairly choked.

There was a second plate on the table, and Sir Percy helped himself to soup, then

poured out a glass of wine. Lady Blakeney, watching from her garret, saw him—his back was turned to Chauvelin—suddenly empty the contents of the pepper pot into his snuff-box. Chauvelin, listening for the footsteps of his men, did not see this.

"Will you honour me, Monsieur l'Abbé?" said Sir Percy, holding out the snuff-box.

Chauvelin took a pinch, then gave a cry of anguish and clapped his hands to his eyes. The pepper had blinded him.

Under cover of his enemy's helplessness, Sir Percy walked out of the room.

IV.

WHEN Chauvelin recovered his sight, he vowed bitter vengeance against Blakeney. His men brought him news that the fugitives were hiding in a hut on the coast until Sir Percy's yacht could pick them up. Degas had secured a cart, driven by a supposed Jew (he did not know that it was Sir Percy in disguise) to take them to the place, and they started for the hut.

Lady Blakeney crept after them, determining to get to the hut first and warn her husband. As she came in sight of the hut she stumbled, and Chauvelin seized her.

Tearing herself from his grasp, she ran towards the hut. It was empty.

Chauvelin, as he ran after her, was furious. In the hut, he picked up a piece of paper on which Sir Percy had written: "Once on board the yacht, send the boat back for me, and tell my men I shall be at the creek, which is in a direct line opposite 'The Chat Gris.'"

After seeing that the supposed Jew had received a tremendous thrashing for his abject cowardice, the furious Chauvelin rushed away to the creek and left Lady Blakeney swooning on the ground.

She was awakened from her swoon by a good, solid, absolutely British "Damn!"

"Percy, Percy!" she shrieked. "Come to me!"

"It's all very well, calling me, m'dear," said Sir Percy's voice, coming from the Jew's mouth, "but these demned frog-eaters have trussed me like a goose on a spit, and I am as weak as a mouse after the thrashing they've given me."

Then she recognised him, in spite of his disguise, and their misunderstandings were all banished. They hurried down to the shore, found a boat from the yacht waiting for them, and were saved. The message left in the hut was written to mislead the Frenchmen.

THE GREAT REFUSAL.

By MAXWELL GRAY.

(John Long. 6s.)

I.

AT the foot of a polished beech-stem, in the dappling shade, Lady Isobel Mostyn and her friend Blanche Ingram saw a man lying full-length, his head sunk on an outstretched arm, from which a book had slipped to the grass, his eyes fast sealed in deep sleep.

"A faun, a sleeping spirit," Isobel whispered, "else the guardian spirit of the wood."

"Too spiritual. Galahad? Not quite. Parsifal, the pure fool."

"This is no fool, Blanche."

"Poor lad, how tired he looks."

"How abominably lazy! Only one of your Oxford undergrads, after all. Was it wine or oil last night?"

They were turning away, when a breeze lifted the branches, and a thin manuscript fell from the sleeper's book. Blanche chased and brought it back. She was shutting it in the book, when the sleeper opened his eyes. "This is yours, I think," said the visitor, and faded away, leaving nothing behind but a warm stir of heart, the thrill and fire of blue and hazel glances.

This was the first meeting of Lady Isobel Mostyn and Adrian Bassett, the undergraduate son of that self-made millionaire, Sir Daniel Bassett.

II.

ADRIAN BASSETT, after leaving Oxford, went down to live in an East End settlement. Sir Daniel was impatiently expecting him at Bassett Towers one hot Saturday August afternoon, and received a telegram to say that Adrian was down with typhoid. Sir Daniel had little sympathy with his son's fads for the amelioration of the workers; Blanche Ingram, also a worker at the settlement, was helping to look after him. Lady Isobel Mostyn was momentarily expected at Bassett Towers, and, when she came, Sir Daniel, admiring her fair, gracious beauty, could not help thinking what an admirable wife she would make for Adrian.

"Restless night, temperature 108," was the first bulletin sent to Sir Daniel the next morning. The doctor at the settlement, carefully surveying the patient, noticed his hand steal towards a little packet which had just come by post.

The doctor tore the cover from the box

and disclosed some sprays of lemon verbena and a few myrtle boughs just breaking into bloom. There was a paper inside the box—

"From Lady Bassett's garden.—I.M."

Isobel Mostyn, straying into the quaint old garden which had been Adrian's mother's, had sent him the flowers.

A few days later, when Adrian was out of danger, Isobel Mostyn telegraphed to Blanche Ingram to lunch with her at the "Princess" Club. They began to talk about Adrian. "He can't bear it all," said Blanche. "Cheerfulness is the soul of that kind of work at the settlement, and every day it makes him sadder. He told me that he could neither eat nor sleep for thinking of that great mass of inevitable, incurable suffering and want, for which he could find no remedy. I was talking to his nurse yesterday, and she was saying what great influence little things have on the sick. 'And before all things I bless whoever sent some bits of myrtle and verbena from Norton Bassett to my patient,' she said. 'He's never been anything like so bad since. He watches the myrtle by the hour as if his salvation hung upon it!'"

The sound of a faint sob made Blanche start and turn to see a shower of tears leaping down Isobel's dress, her face was screened by a paper she was using as a fan.

"She loves him also," Blanche thought, as she went East in an omnibus.

III.

It was Sir Daniel's great ambition that his son should become a good business man and take his place in the "Emporium." So the dreamy University student, full of imagination and poetry, put his shoulder to the wheel and drudged manfully, only to become an average clerk, without talent or initiative, or any special quality but conscientiousness. He had won Isobel Mostyn's love. She loved him with her whole soul, but money was absolutely necessary to her, and Adrian's father was enormously wealthy. So that when Adrian came to his father one day and said that he could not conscientiously approve of his father's methods of business, he ought to have known that he was making it impossible for him to marry Isobel.

Sir Daniel offered to make him a partner in the concern, and Adrian declined.

"You say my methods are immoral—that you can't work with me. You judge and condemn me," foamed Sir Daniel.

"My views may be wrong, but I can't go against them. No man can go against conscience. Father, if you thought as I do, you would have nothing to do with such a business."

This was the last straw. "Go," said Sir Daniel. "Go, I say, go, and see how you like starving on fine notions. Never darken my doors again. Go!"

And this was the beginning of Adrian Bassett's Great Refusal.

IV.

ADRIAN soon discovered the consequences of the Great Refusal, for Isobel Mostyn married the Marquis of Aynesworth, although she still loved Adrian. His father hoped that Adrian would come back, but he was earning his living as a car driver, and was dismissed from one post for writing an article entitled "From the Depths"—an article about cracking men's sinews and wrenching their joints to save using machinery, and then turning them off to starve.

When Adrian had lived in the "Depths" for some time, he found that he could do more good by coming out as secretary to a rising young politician who advocated those social reforms which were so dear to himself. And it was in this capacity that he suddenly came in contact again with the woman he had loved. He was deputed to bring an important message to her husband, and while he awaited Aynesworth's coming Isobel, tired and worn out, and trying to forget him, entered the room.

For the moment she thought that the dark figure must be a delusion; then she stumbled blindly forward with a cry of "Adrian," and would have fallen but that he caught her in his arms just as the door opened and Lord Aynesworth appeared.

V.

AYNESWORTH, coming to his wife the next day for an explanation, found her still in bed. There was an empty glass upon a small table at the bed's head. Taking it to the light, he saw that it had contained a dark fluid with a drug-like smell. There was a purplish shadow under Isobel's eyes, a pinched blueness about the lips, and a vague greyness all over her face.

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"You'll do this once too often," he said, dashing clear water in her face.

"My head!" moaned Isobel.

"A most degrading spectacle," he commented. "The degradation of Isobel Aynesworth. It kills sooner than whiskey. Nothing ruins beauty more utterly."

He sent for a doctor, who put Isobel in charge of a trained nurse accustomed to deal with the morphia habit, and Isobel reluctantly began to return to the life she had learnt to loathe.

VI.

AFTER Isobel's illness, Blanche Ingram took her into the country, and there, in the society of her little baby, Isobel began to recover her hold on life. She was much interested in hearing from Blanche of a "Guild of Christian Commerce" with which Adrian was connected, and shrewdly suspected that Blanche had loved Adrian ever since that first memorable meeting at Oxford. As the years rolled by, Aynesworth succeeded to a dukedom, and Isobel tasted of the delight of dreams realised, and the vanity of things earthly. Her last meeting with Adrian was just before his departure to found a settlement in Africa. Then she buried herself under the ermine and strawberry leaves, and let him pass out of her life.

When Adrian came to see Blanche Ingram, and learnt that she was not going to join his Brotherhood in Africa, he suddenly realised that his life had no meaning without her. "How are we to get on without you?" he asked. "The whole Brotherhood depends upon you. I love you." And he took her hands in his.

"Oh, you are breaking my hands!" she cried.

Archdeacon Ingram suddenly came face to face with a wet-eyed daughter in earnest conference with an agitated man.

"I was telling him I had decided not to go to Africa," Blanche explained.

"I was asking her to be my wife," Adrian said.

"And a very sensible thing, too," the Archdeacon replied. "I cannot imagine a more suitable match."

"She won't hear of it, Archdeacon. She can't leave you and her mother."

"But for this cause, my dear," said the Archdeacon, laying a gentle hand on her shoulder, "a man shall leave his father and mother."

And Blanche consented.

Mrs. Claibourne's Cure. ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By UNA HUDSON.

The romance of a note and a box of orchids.

MRS. CLAIBOURNE was literally dying by inches. Three doctors had admitted as much, and each had been obliged to confess in his turn his utter ignorance as to the nature of her baffling malady.

Then Dr. Poynter took charge of the case. He had studied not only medicine, but human nature, and he knew that when a woman, still in her early thirties, with more money than she can spend, more friends than she knows what to do with, and nothing at all to cause her worry or annoyance, takes to her bed and loses all interest in life there's a reason for it other than that of mere physical disability.

Upon inquiry, he learnt that Mrs. Claibourne's husband had been dead for some two years, and that her illness dated from that time, she having fallen beside his coffin in a state of utter collapse.

Further investigation convinced him that it was not, as he had at first been inclined to believe, a case of a broken heart, but rather one of a crushed spirit.

Twelve years with a man whom she neither loved nor respected, but whom she forced herself to obey, had so wrought on her nerves that his death had found her without power to resume her normal mental balance.

Dr. Poynter considered her the unfortunate victim of a mistaken sense of duty. She was a nice little woman, and it was a thousand pities she should have so sacrificed herself for a man who, if report were to be believed, had been rather a bad lot and utterly unworthy of her.

Dr. Poynter felt a deep interest (entirely professional, of course) in this particular patient, and made frequent calls. He prescribed a tonic, not because he expected it to do any good, but because he had to do something. And he suggested massage. This could do no harm, and some people found it soothing, though Dr. Poynter was of the opinion that Mrs. Claibourne needed rousing, not soothing, but how this was to be done he did not know.

He wasted much precious time and expended much valuable grey matter in the forming of impossible and futile plans before Fate, in the person of an irresponsible florist, mis-sent a box of orchids, and Mrs. Claibourne found herself in possession not only of another woman's flowers, but of her love-letter as well.

It was just an unaddressed slip of paper tucked in among the flowers, and Mrs. Claibourne unfolded and read it quite unsuspectingly.

"Girlie, dear," it ran, "it was all my fault. Won't you take me back?" "JACK."

Now, "Girlie, dear," is, for purposes of identification, painfully inadequate, and "Jack" but little better. But, somehow, one or the other of them must be found. There was no doubt as to that in Mrs. Claibourne's mind. And she must find them.

So it came about that Dr. Poynter, coming in some few hours later for his regular evening call, was treated to the very unusual spectacle of a woman turning back from the brink of the grave to adjust a love affair.

Mrs. Claibourne had risen from the couch upon which she spent most of her time, and was seated before her writing-desk. A directory was open before her, and she was extremely busy with pencil and pad of paper. Across the room, at a hastily-cleared table, sat her nurse and her maid, similarly occupied.

The doctor stared, as well he might, and demanded to know the meaning of so unusual a proceeding.

Mrs. Claibourne not only explained, but offered the note and the flowers for the doctor's inspection.

"You've seen the florist?" he inquired.

"Of course. And he says he doesn't know who ordered the orchids. So stupid of him; he doesn't seem to know anything. So it's quite useless to expect any assistance from him. And isn't it dreadful? They've evidently quarreled, and he's trying to make up, and she doesn't know anything about it. I daresay he's perfectly frantic

because he doesn't get an answer to his note. There's simply no knowing what he won't do if we don't find him soon."

"Find him!" said Dr. Poynter. "My dear Mrs. Claibourne, am I to understand that you seriously contemplate trying to find a man, the only clue to whom is the name 'Jack'?"

"I'll find him," said Mrs. Claibourne, "if I have to rake this town with a fine tooth-comb to do it."

The doctor was sorely tempted to cry "Bravo!" But, instead, he remarked that the last census showed a population of nearly one hundred thousand.

"Which included women and children," Mrs. Claibourne cried triumphantly. "And it's safe to suppose that not all of the men are named Jack. I'm disappointed in you, Dr. Poynter, and ashamed for you," she scolded briskly. "I thought you'd be interested and want to help."

"I am. I do," the doctor interposed hastily. He chuckled inaudibly. His patient was developing a very satisfactory spirit of her own. In time it might even require curbing.

"If you'll just tell me what you're doing, and what you want me to do——" he suggested meekly.

"Well, you see," Mrs. Claibourne explained, "we're going through the directory——"

"Good gracious!"

"Oh! it isn't as difficult as it sounds. We've already done the A's and B's and C's., and now we're working on the D's and E's and F's. And we make a list of all the men whose names are Jack or John. And to-morrow I'm going to go and call on them."

"And will you show them the note, and ask if they're that particular Jack?"

"Dear me, no! I'm sure neither 'Jack' nor 'Girlie' would like that note exhibited all over town. I shall get a specimen of each man's handwriting if I can and compare it with the note, and——"

"My dear Mrs. Claibourne," said the doctor, "if I hadn't left my hat downstairs I'd put it on just for the pleasure of taking it off to you. You should have been a detective."

"You're jesting," said Mrs. Claibourne.

"Upon my honour," protested the doctor. "And if any of these gentlemen should prove unaccommodating in the matter of samples of handwriting?"

"Then I'll ask them to dinner, and in return for my hospitality they shall be made to relate all the story of their lives."

"Good! And will you have them come singly or together?"

"I haven't decided," Mrs. Claibourne confessed. "But I think it would depend somewhat how many of them there are."

"Better have them one at a time," the doctor advised. "And I hope you'll remember to ask me also. I'm sure you'll need my valuable assistance."

"Well, I need it now, at any rate," Mrs. Claibourne laughed. "Don't you want to take a piece of my directory—I'm sorry I can't offer you a whole one, but we have only three—and run through the H's?"

"Delighted," said the doctor. "But why mutilate an unoffending directory? If you will permit me to sit beside you we can both use the same book."

Mrs. Claibourne swept her skirts aside to make room for the doctor's chair, and he took his place beside her.

"Here's John Galt, a bricklayer," he said. "Do you want him on your list?"

Mrs. Claibourne's maid, sitting across the room, giggled.

"Heavens!" said Mrs. Claibourne, "those flowers were *orchids*. Have you forgotten? And didn't you read the note?"

The doctor admitted that he had, and eliminated Mr. Galt.

Then he put a question concerning "Gresham, Jack W., undertaker."

Mrs. Claibourne considered.

"Undertakers generally have palms and geraniums and things in their windows, don't they?" she said. "And I daresay he could afford to send orchids if he wanted to. But, ugh! how horrid! I don't want him to be the Jack we're looking for. And what earthly excuse can I find for calling on an undertaker?"

"There, I knew you couldn't get along without me," Dr. Poynter exulted. "I'll see Gresham for you, I think I've met him."

"You mean," Mrs. Claibourne suggested mischievously, "you've been able to put some business his way?"

"Oh, well, if you *will* talk shop," the Doctor retorted, "I shall be forced to ask if you've taken your tonic to-day, though I really hadn't intended mentioning anything so disagreeable."

"The tonic's not particularly disagreeable," Mrs. Claibourne objected. "It tastes rather like water."

Which was not at all strange, considering that it consisted for the most part of *aqua pura*, with a dash of flavouring and a bit of cochineal to give it colour.

"But I really don't remember if I took it or not. Miss Sinclair, have I taken my tonic to-day?"

The nurse, being thus appealed to, blushed guiltily.

"I'm afraid, Doctor," she apologised, "that we forgot it. You see, we've had so much else to think about."

"H'm," said the Doctor. "Mrs. Claibourne, let me feel your pulse."

Mrs. Claibourne offered a slim white wrist, and the Doctor's thumb and forefinger incircled it in a clasp not strictly professional. To a casual and disinterested observer it might have seemed that he held it rather longer than necessary. But the nurse was sympathetic, the maid discreet, and Mrs. Claibourne seemed not to mind, so no harm was done.

Then for form's sake he looked at Mrs. Claibourne's tongue, and put a few questions to the nurse.

"I think," he decided gravely, "that for a time at least the tonic may safely be discontinued."

The next afternoon the doctor had a note from his erstwhile patient.

"I have decided to take them one at a time," she wrote, "and to-night I shall entertain Mr. Jack Addington, the architect. Come and help me. Dinner at seven."

Dr. Poynter came, Mr. Addington had already arrived and was being entertained by Miss Sinclair, now promoted from the position of nurse to that of companion.

"I told him," Mrs. Claibourne explained to the doctor, "that I was thinking of making some alterations in the house, and that if he would drop in to dinner we could discuss the matter during the evening. Do you think he's the Jack we're looking for?"

"Can't say just yet," said the doctor. "I'll observe him carefully at dinner, and let you know later."

As was right and proper, Mr. Addington took in his hostess, but during the meal his attentions to Miss Sinclair were so marked that it did not require clairvoyant powers to convince Mrs. Claibourne that he was not the man of whom she was in search. Had she had any lingering doubts they would all have been dispelled when Mr. Addington, forgetful of the alleged alterations, drew an envelope from his pocket, and with Miss Sinclair's assistance sketched upon it the plan of a cottage "just the right size for two."

It was then that Dr. Poynter and Mrs. Claibourne tactfully withdrew to the library.

Mrs. Claibourne dropped into a low chair before the fire.

"Well?" she questioned.

The doctor rested one arm on the mantelpiece and smiled down at her.

"He's a young man after my own heart," he said. "Evidently he knows what he wants, and also, I should judge, how to get it."

"It's very nice," said Mrs. Claibourne, with all a woman's deep satisfaction in a budding love affair. "And Miss Sinclair is a dear girl. But, all the same, I can't help being a bit disappointed. I'd quite decided he was the man we're looking for. And now I must begin all over again. Well, did you see your undertaker?"

"I did. He's a widower with three children. Next week he's going to marry his housekeeper. Invited me to the wedding."

"Thank Heaven!" Mrs. Claibourne exclaimed fervently. "I never could forgive Jack for being an undertaker."

"What do you want him to be?"

The doctor's face wore an amused smile.

"I don't exactly know," Mrs. Claibourne confessed. "But I *do* know what I *don't* want him to be. Mr. Addington is the only man I've seen to-day with whom I was at all taken. The others were simply impossible."

"Were there many of the others?" the doctor inquired sympathetically.

"Ten," said Mrs. Claibourne. "All sorts and conditions, all sizes and ages."

"How long is it going to take you to go through the list?" the doctor inquired with deep interest.

"About a week, I think, if I hurry."

And Mrs. Claibourne hurried. At the end of the week she knew more about the matrimonial prospects of the Jacks and Johns in the directory than they did themselves. And she had become an expert in graphology. But she had not discovered the particular Jack for whom she searched.

"It's terrible not to have found him," she told Dr. Poynter, who was now filling the post of confidential adviser. "And what to do now I simply do not know."

"Perhaps he's non-existent," the Doctor suggested.

"Now you know that couldn't be. We have his note."

"Well, even if you have failed to make 'Jack' and 'Girlie' happy, at any rate you've succeeded admirably with Mr. Addington and Miss Sinclair."

"They intend to announce the engagement

at the end of the month," Mrs. Claibourne said, "and I'm going to give a dinner for them. You'll come, of course. Daisy Hammond has promised to think up something absolutely new in the way of table decoration for me; she is so original. And she's going to design the menu cards."

The next day Daisy Hammond called to discuss the prospective dinner.

"There'll be twelve of us," Mrs. Claibourne said. "I don't like too many at table. A small party is much more jolly. The engaged couple, of course, and Dr. Poynter and myself——"

Daisy smiled at the unconscious coupling of names.

"You and Mr. Fenway——"

Daisy caught her breath in a quick little gasp. "Not Jack Fenway!" she protested. "Oh! I couldn't meet him, really."

"Jack Fenway!" Mrs. Claibourne almost shrieked the words. "Who is Jack Fenway? The Mr. Fenway I'm talking about is Jeremiah."

"Yes, I know his name is Jeremiah. But that is such an awful name he said I might call him Jack. And I did, for he was *my* Jack until I—I got cross and sent him away. And, oh, I'm so wretchedly unhappy!"

Daisy was on her knees sobbing into the folds of Mrs. Claibourne's gown. Mrs. Claibourne shook her gently.

"Stop crying, dear," she said, "and listen to me. Your Jack wants you to take him back; he does, indeed. I've had his note for more than a week. No, don't get angry. Let me explain. It came to me by mistake in a box of orchids, and I've hunted this town from one end to the other to find the man who wrote it. You see, it was signed 'Jack' and it began 'Girlie, dear.'"

"Really, Mrs. Claibourne, oh, really!" Daisy cried softly. "Do give it to me at once."

"My dear, I can't. There isn't a scrap of it left. We wore it completely out comparing it with different handwritings."

"Oh!" Daisy cried tearfully. "How dreadful! How can I know it was really mine? Jack never called me 'Girlie.'"

Mrs. Claibourne laughed softly. "You foolish child," she said, "he's probably called you 'Darling' and 'Sweetheart' and 'Love' and 'Dearest' till he's ashamed to look one of those words in the face. There was nothing left for him but 'Girlie.' And of course it was yours. Don't I know for an absolute fact that none of the other Jacks wrote it?"

Daisy sat up and began to mop her wet eyes. Like most of us, she was not unwilling to believe the thing she wanted to believe.

"What did he say?" she asked.

"Oh! it was very short. Just:

Girlie, dear, it was all my fault. Won't you take me back?
JACK.

Daisy smiled and dimpled. "Oh, I *know* it was Jack," she cried softly. "It sounds just like him. But it was not his fault; it was all mine."

Mrs. Claibourne pushed the girl towards the writing-desk.

"Then tell him so this very moment," she urged. "And I will write to him, too, so he will know you are answering the minute you knew anything about it, and, oh, Daisy, we'll announce your engagement, too, at my dinner."

It would not be going too far to say that when Mr. Jeremiah Fenway received those two notes his surprise was unbounded. For Mr. Fenway had sent no orchids and written no penitent note. But he had not been entirely happy since he quarreled with his little *fiancée*, and promptly decided to follow whither the hand of Providence so plainly directed.

It was Mrs. Claibourne, of course, who communicated the good news to Dr. Poynter. He listened with so openly incredulous an air that she was moved to inquire somewhat sharply whether he doubted her word.

He made all haste to assure her that he did not.

"But," he explained, "I really didn't think you would find him."

Which was not strange considering that he himself had written that note, hoping thereby to stimulate Mrs. Claibourne's curiosity and rouse her from her unhealthy lethargy.

But the wisest people are they who do not tell all they know, and Dr. Poynter very properly decided that if Mr. Fenway were willing to be held responsible for the note he had not written it was not for him to declare otherwise.

"And so," he said thoughtfully, "there will be two engagements to announce instead of one. Why not have a third?"

"A third?"

Mrs. Claibourne's eyes opened wide.

"Yes, yours and mine."

And because she could think of no good reason for saying no, Mrs. Claibourne said yes.

Our Pinafore Pages.

A special recommendation—if any be needed—of the stories that compose this feature is that, before acceptance, they are read over to children. Only those stories which the children can understand and enjoy find a place here.

LITTLE HANS AND BLACK KARL.

By WILLIAM COLLINGE.

The story of how a boy spent his money at a fair.

HANS was a little orphan boy who lived in a quiet village in the Hartz mountains, which are in the middle of Germany. His father and mother had died when he was quite a baby, and ever since he had been brought up by two old aunts, who were called Frida and Nita. Aunt Frida was kind and good-natured; but Aunt Nita was rather sour and cross. Aunt Nita was good in other things, but she said that she simply couldn't stand children.

It was Easter time, and Hans said he would very much like to go to the old town of Goslar to buy some coloured eggs; for at Easter time the pretty market-place of Goslar is full of stalls laden with these eggs, which are painted all the colours of the rainbow. Hans was fond of going to Goslar because many of the market women, who sat behind the stalls, were his friends, and he was almost always sure to get presents of gingerbread, nuts, and apples from them. As a rule he was taken by his aunts, but, as he was ten years old, the old ladies thought that this time he was quite old enough to be trusted to go alone.

"Now, Hans," said Aunt Frida, "here is a thaler (a German coin worth three shillings) for you. Be sure that you don't spend it all at the fair, because you won't get another for a long time."

"Yes," snapped Aunt Nita, "and you're a very lucky little boy. No one ever gave me a thaler when I was your age. I expect you will be greedy and spend it all. But, above all, mind you don't speak to Black Karl when you get to the edge of the forest."

Black Karl was called black because he had a very long black beard and looked very

fierce, and because he looked so fierce he was thought to be very wicked. He lived in a little hut at the edge of the forest. He was a tinker and basket maker, and sometimes the villagers used to give him their kettles and pans to mend, and buy his baskets.

So off to the market started little Hans. His aunts had told him that he might walk to Goslar, but that he was to return with old Breitman, the carrier. This pleased him very much, for he liked to listen to the old man's stories of the war, for he had been a soldier, and sometimes when they were going up-hill he was allowed to drive the grey mare. It was a bright, sunny morning, so Hans felt very gay, and went along skipping, and whistling, and singing.

As soon as he got to Goslar he went straight to the market-place, and was soon among his old friends.

"Good morning, Hans," said one old woman.

"Ah, here's little Hannschen," exclaimed another.

"Oh, look at his pretty flaxen curls!" cried a third, trying to stroke his fair hair: Hans hated to have his hair stroked because he thought he was being laughed at, so he ran away to Frau Grebel, who never teased him. It was not very long before Frau Grebel had filled his satchel with the coloured eggs and had added, as a gift from herself, some ginger-bread and a slice of pumpernickel, a kind of rich brown bread of which all Germans are very fond.

When Hans had bought all he wanted from Frau Grebel there was still an hour to spare before he must find his friend Breitman, the carrier. So he walked about the fair and looked at all the strange sights:

Presently he came to a large tent outside which there was a big notice saying :

THE WIZARD OF THE NORTH !
THE MOST WONDERFUL SHOW ON EARTH !
ONLY TWOPENCE A SEAT !
If You Don't Like the Show, You Can Have
Your Money Back !!

"Well," thought Hans, "Aunt Nita couldn't blame me for wasting my money here, because if I am not pleased I can get my money back." So Hans paid his money and entered the tent. There were not many people there, but that did not trouble him because he was interested in the conjuror. The conjuror was very clever and did many strange tricks. Once he borrowed a handkerchief from a friend, and, placing it on a table, said :

"Gentlemen, you see that this is a handkerchief?"

Everybody agreed that it was a handkerchief.

"Heigh, presto, pass!" he cried out. The handkerchief seemed to melt in the air, and out popped a dear little white rabbit. Hans shouted for joy; for he had never seen anything so wonderful before. Now, the conjuror noticed that Hans looked pleased, and that he was much better dressed than anybody else; so he thought he would try to rob him.

"Now," he cried, "my last trick is the most wonderful of all. If any of you will lend me a mark (a coin worth a shilling), I will place it under this glass and when I say *Konstantinopolitanischer dudelsack pfeife-macher gesell!* I shall lift up the glass and instead of one mark you will see three bright, shining new ones." No one answered because, with the exception of Hans, all were poor and had no marks.

"Perhaps the little boy in the blue suit, with the flaxen curls, can lend me a mark. Such a nice little boy is sure to have a mark."

Everybody seated round Hans began to laugh. Now Hans hated to be laughed at, so to show what a big man he was, he cried out :

"Here you are, Mr. Conjuror, here is my mark, and mind you give me the three marks instead of it."

The cunning conjuror took the mark, placed it under the glass, and lifted it up three times, just to show the people that it was there right enough. He then covered it up, and called out the magic word in such a solemn way that Hans began to creep all

over. On lifting up the glass, there, sure enough, were three bright, shining marks. These the conjuror gave to Hans, advising him not to show them to anyone for fear he should be robbed.

Hans was very pleased with himself, and thought he had been quite clever in getting three marks for one. In fact, he was looking forward even to being praised by cross Aunt Nita when he got home.

He had, however, wasted so much time at the conjuror's that he had to rush off to find old Breitman. When he reached the White Stag he found that it was much later than he thought, and that Breitman had gone without him. "Well," thought Hans, "this is unlucky, because I shall have to walk all the way home."

Still, if he had to walk he thought that it was no reason why he should go hungry; so he went to a shop to buy some buns, because he wished to take away untouched all the nuts, eggs, and pumper-nickel, which Frau Grebel had given to him. When he had bought the buns he gave one of his bright new marks and asked for change.

"You naughty, naughty boy," cried the old shopwoman, "this is a bad mark!"

Then Hans explained how he had got it. The good woman was very sorry for him, but told him that she was afraid that he would never see his own mark again because the Wizard of the North was a well-known rascal, and always left the town as soon as he had given his show. There was nothing else for it; so Hans set out on his long trudge home, feeling far less happy than he had felt in the morning.

When he reached the edge of the forest it was so pitch dark that he missed his way, and soon was lost among the great, tall trees.

Hans trudged on and on, always hoping to find the right road. Presently he came to a clearing in the middle of which there was a big van from which smoke was issuing. Hans saw that it belonged to gipsies, but, although he had been told never to talk to such people, he thought it would be better to get information from them than spend a whole night in the forest.

So he crept quietly up to the van and looked through a crack in the side. His hair almost stood on end from fright; for whom do you think he saw snoring away inside—why, the Wizard of the North! Hans took to his heels as fast as he could; in fact, he was so anxious to get far away from the place that he never looked where he was running to.

All of a sudden he found himself saved from falling by a big man with a black beard into whom he had rushed head first. The big man was Black Karl. Black Karl was much amused, and cried out:

"Hallo, young shaver, do you always run into strangers like that?"

Then, noticing how frightened poor little Hans looked, he added:

"Don't be frightened; I know I'm Black Karl, but I don't eat little boys."

He then asked him what he was doing in the forest at that time all alone. Then Hans told him his story. Black Karl was very angry and said:

"I know that conjuror of yours. You come to my cabin, which is quite close, and, when you've had a little supper with me, we'll go together and soon settle Mr. Conjuror and get your mark back."

So Hans went back with him to his cabin, and, as soon as they had finished supper, Black Karl took down a heavy whip from the wall, and they set out together for the clearing. When they got there they found the conjuror seated outside the van counting his money.

Then Black Karl, creeping up silently, took the rascal by the shoulders, and said that, if he did not at once give up the mark

which he had taken from little Hans, he would give him a sound thrashing with his whip. The Wizard of the North could hardly speak for rage, but when he saw what a big man Karl was, and what a strong, ugly whip he was carrying, he gave in sulkily and handed back the mark to little Hans.

Hans was delighted, and could not thank Karl enough. Then Karl, who knew every inch of the forest, took him home.

Aunt Frida and Aunt Nita had been in a fearful state of mind, and, after inquiring everywhere in vain for Hans, were just on the point of going to Goslar to make inquiries. So you may guess how surprised and glad they were to see him being led by Black Karl. Aunt Frida was overjoyed, and even Aunt Nita's face was all smiles.

When the old ladies heard all that Black Karl had done they were very much ashamed of themselves for having ever mistrusted him, and could scarcely do enough for him. But Karl refused to take any reward, and all he asked was that Hans might be allowed to visit him sometimes in his cabin at the edge of the forest. So Hans often used to visit Karl, and people, when they saw them together, would say: "Ah, there go little Hans and Black Karl!"

✻ ✻ ✻ A CHILD'S PROBLEM. ✻ ✻ ✻

BY E. M. THORPE.

*Two little boys were both in bed;
Tommy was really ill,
And he was dull, and so he said:
"Do please stay with me, Will."*

*So Mother said, when she went out:
"Tommy, lie very still,
And he who's well must run about,
And wait on him who's ill."*

*But, oh! so hungry in a while,
Willie began to feel,
Said he: "I'm sure I'd eat a pile,
So let us have a meal."*

*Said Tommy: "Yes, and he who's well
Must wait on him who's not.
But which is well? Oh, can you tell?
For I have quite forgot!"*

*Said Willie then: "My toe's in pain."
Said Tommy: "Why, it's you;
I'll fetch your lunch and come again,
And bring an orange, too."*

*So Tommy searched and brought good things,
Without another word.
They disappeared as if they'd wings.
Lo! Mother's step was heard.*

*"Oh, Tommy dear, you're not in bed,
And, Will, what's this I see?"
"We couldn't 'member which you said,
And Tommy fought it's me."*

*Tommy was ill for weeks nigh four,
Instead of only one.
Said Mother: "I shall talk no more,
But stay and see things done."*

THE BUNNY'S ESCAPE.



By C. W. STENSON.

The adventures of a little rabbit which ran away from home.

A VERY long time ago, about the time when the cow jumped over the moon, there lived in a farmyard, with all the other animals, three little rabbits, which on account of their colour were called Blackie, Brownie, and Snowy.

Now, when these three little bunnies were about a year old, they thought they would like to see what was outside the farmyard. Snowy, the youngest, was the most inquisitive, and one day he wandered through the gate, but when he found himself alone, he got very frightened and ran back to his companions.

When Brownie and Blackie saw Snowy looking so frightened they asked him what was the matter; he told them that he had nearly lost himself in a strange country outside the farm-gate. The other two bunnies laughed at him so much that the very next day he ran out of the gate again.

This time he was not so frightened, and, feeling very brave, ran on. Presently he entered what he thought was a big forest; it was really a field of cabbages, and here little Snowy's troubles began, for when he wanted to get out of the forest he found he was lost; and instead of coming out he only went further into it.

Poor little Snowy got very frightened, and did not know what to do, and, besides, it was getting dark and he was very hungry. At last, quite tired out and feeling so weak for want of food, he tried what the trees tasted like, and you can imagine his surprise to find that they were all cabbages!

It was not long before Snowy was very busy having a good feed off the nearest and biggest cabbage he could find, and he kept on nibbling at the cabbage till he could eat no more. Then, feeling quite satisfied, he lay down to think, and his thoughts naturally turned to the farmyard where he had left Brownie and Blackie.

After a good rest, Snowy thought he ought to be getting back to his companions, but as he didn't know which way to go he made up his mind that he would have to spend the night in the cabbage forest, so he settled himself down, and soon fell asleep.

We will now go back to the farmyard where the other bunnies were. Snowy was not missed during the day very much, but when feeding time came his absence was soon discovered, and a search was immediately started to see if he were hidden anywhere in the yard. The man who fed the rabbits did not say anything to the master because he knew how angry he would be, so he made up his mind to have a proper search the next morning.

Brownie and Blackie wondered what could have happened to Snowy, and, what was worse, they were shut up in a big wire house and not let out; but being sensible little rabbits, they soon settled down in their new house and made themselves comfortable.

Early the next morning they heard the man who fed them say that he was going to make a hunt for the lost bunny, and that he would take the dog with him, and in a few minutes they saw him start.

We left Snowy comfortably asleep under a big cabbage. We will now see what he is dreaming of, for, of course, rabbits can dream like anybody else.

Well, when Snowy shut his eyes he was very surprised to find himself in a big wood, but the trees were not cabbages, and to his astonishment he discovered that he was the biggest animal there. He saw a cow which seemed about half his size, and some sheep much smaller. Snowy was so delighted with himself in his new position that he gambled and frisked about with delight.

Presently he heard a voice calling: "Snowy! Snowy! Where are you?"

Snowy looked everywhere, but could not see the man who was calling. All at once he saw a little figure coming through the trees, calling out to him. What was Snowy's surprise and amusement when the man, as soon as he saw Snowy, turned and ran away as hard as he could.

This was too much for Snowy, he could not resist running after the man and knocking him down; then, picking him up, he would jump right over him. The man howled with fright, not with pain, for Snowy took care not to hurt him. At last he got tired of worrying the poor man, so

he licked him all over, a proceeding the man did not seem to relish, much to Snowy's surprise!

Suddenly the man called out: "Frisk! Frisk! fetch him!" and the next moment Snowy heard a tremendous bark quite close to him which frightened him very much, and with a start he woke up. to find that the bark was a real one.

This all happened the morning after Snowy's disappearance from the farmyard, and the noise he heard was the barking of the farmyard dog which had come with his master in search of Snowy, but so far had not seen him.

As the barking got nearer and nearer the poor little bunny felt so frightened that he could not stand it any longer, but sprang out of his hiding-place and bounded away as fast as he could. As soon as the dog caught sight of the rabbit he gave chase, yapping as he ran. Snowy did not care where he went so long as he got away from that horrid dog; and the dog on his part was just as anxious to catch that little woolly thing which kept bounding on in front of him.

Though Snowy managed to puzzle his pursuer once, Frisk soon took up the scent again, and gradually gained on poor little bunny, who was now nearly exhausted.

Frisk was just on the point of making a snap at bunny's neck when to his surprise Snowy put on extra speed and turned sharp to the right and made straight for a house that was close by.

It so happened that the door was open; in darted Snowy and straight up a flight of stairs. Rushing blindly on, he jumped into what he thought was a good hiding-place—a big cupboard.

Poor Snowy was so tired that he could not move another step even if he tried: After lying quiet for a while, and not hearing the dog following him, he felt happier. Then he heard voices downstairs, a man and a woman were talking about him; he could hear the man telling the woman about Snowy, how he had run away and had been seen to go into her house.

There was something about the man's

voice that seemed familiar to Snowy, but he was so excited at the time that he did not recognise it. After a while the man and woman came upstairs, and now Snowy felt frightened again, because he thought the dog might be there, too.

They entered the room, and when Snowy saw the man who always fed him and his brothers in the farmyard he jumped right out of the cupboard on to the floor. The man made a grab at Snowy and put him into a basket that he had with him. So Snowy was caught, and, after all, he was not sorry, for now he knew that he was quite safe from that dreadful dog Frisk.

After talking to the woman for a time, the man started on his way back to the farmyard. Snowy began to think what a naughty little rabbit he had been, and, peeping out through a slit in the basket, could just see Frisk trotting behind. "Ah!" he wondered—"what would you do if you knew I was so close to you? I suppose you would tear the basket to pieces and eat me up!"

After what seemed a very long time, Snowy could hear the noise of the farmyard, and presently they came to the gate.

Now, thought Snowy, he will let me out; but instead of that they went across the yard and into a little house. Here the man opened the basket and took out Snowy, who found that he was in a sort of house covered with wire; but Brownie and Blackie were there, too, and immediately he ran over to them, he was so glad to see them again; and later on he told them all his adventures and how he was nearly caught by the dog, and of the wonderful country he had been in where you could eat cabbages all day.

When he had finished, he wanted to know all about the new house. Blackie acted as spokesman, and explained that when Snowy had been missed, that house had been built and they were put inside, and were never to be allowed out again; then he gave Snowy a good scolding. Snowy cried very much, and promised never to try to find new countries again, and he kept his promise.

Every reader, whether in the habit of reading serials or no, is recommended to scan at least the first chapter of this story. If by so doing a desire to continue to the finish is not awakened, I shall be very much surprised.

Reaping the Whirlwind. ❁

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ By ALFRED LEWIS, A.R.C.A.

CHAPTER I:

The Cry at the Wedding.

AN old-fashioned story usually ends with a wedding, and the reader is expected to believe that from that time forth until the end of their days the much tried and, perchance, long parted hero and heroine will walk hand-in-hand along the flower-strewn paths of happiness and peace. The present story begins with a wedding; and a wedding is always an interesting event, even to those cynical persons who maintain that the bridal ceremony is in most cases but the beginning of sorrows, and who affect to see in the flowers and gay dresses but a survival of the ancient custom of decking with garlands the victims intended for sacrifice.

There is a touch of romance hidden away somewhere in most hearts; and the spectacle of a man and woman publicly dedicating their lives to each other will always draw together a considerable number of persons, of the fair sex at any rate, as onlookers, even if the wedding is one of the most ordinary description, and if the spectators know absolutely nothing of the contracting parties.

But when it is what is called a marriage in high life, when it has been announced weeks beforehand, when it takes place in a fashionable London church, when the guests are many and well-known, the bridal dresses said to be splendid, the preparations on a large and costly scale, the bride beautiful and an heiress, and the bridegroom a member of a noble family, a crowd of spectators inside and outside the church is a foregone conclusion:

The particular wedding in question had all these elements of interest and notoriety: It had been announced in the fashionable papers; it had been eagerly discussed in

fashionable society, and also in society which was not fashionable.

A perfect army of milliners, dressmakers, jewellers, decorators, upholsterers, and the like had been busy preparing for it for months: And on the one hand there was wealth and all the respect it commands, and on the other birth and position; while on both sides were youth and good looks. What more could be wanted to constitute an event of all-absorbing interest and importance?

All the unmarried women, of whatever age, who had heard of it, and many who had not heard of it, but had chanced to be in the neighbourhood of St. Clement's that morning, and had been attracted by the crimson carpet on the pavement, and the striped awning at the porch, were in the church; while nursemaids with babies, errand-boys with baskets, and other unfortunate persons, who for lack of space or other reasons the sour-faced verger would not admit into the sacred precincts, were crowded together outside, in spite of a drizzling rain, which had been falling for hours.

The patience with which a large section of the British public will brave the elements, will stand drenched to the skin with rain, almost frozen to death with cold, or baked by a scorching sun, in order to witness some person or thing in which they take an interest—indeed, sometimes to see nothing at all, but simply because they observe other people standing—is amazing. It matters little what the object of interest may be.

The same people who will take their stand up a dark passage in the early morning, and endure all the wearisome fatigue of waiting for many hours, in order that they may be the first to rush in when a theatre door opens in the evening; or who will remain all day near a house where a crime

has been committed, looking for nothing in particular, but with their noses flattened, if possible, against the windows, although they can see nothing, and are not likely to see anything, will also submit to any inconvenience in their desire to witness a wedding-party, a funeral, a royal personage, a successful general, or a notorious criminal.

As above stated, the majority of onlookers in this case were, of course, women; and the British female has extraordinary powers of endurance when she has once definitely made up her mind to witness any spectacle whatsoever. So, with dripping umbrellas and dragged skirts, the crowd outside waited, eagerly discussing the wedding and the personages most intimately concerned.

The church was crowded. It was with difficulty that the verger managed to reserve seats for the invited guests. Some adventurous ladies who had pushed their way in tried to wheedle him into allowing them to pass the crimson cord which divided these seats from those left for the general public; a few even endeavoured to slip by unobserved, much to the indignation of that important personage, who looked hot and flurried; and these ladies were highly incensed when their blandishments or their attempts failed. A proffered bribe of a threepenny piece was equally unsuccessful. The coin rejected by the indignant verger fell to the floor, much to the evident astonishment of the would-be briber, who at once went on her knees to look for it, amid the hardly-suppressed titters of those who witnessed the scene.

The crowd outside continued to increase. Fortunately the rain ceased falling, and a gleam of sunshine lit up the street, glorifying everything, flecking the wet pavement and the dull fronts of the neighbouring houses with gold, transforming the appearance of the dingy church, and making the rain-drops on the few stunted bushes planted thereby sparkle like myriads of diamonds.

"Well, if it ain't going to be fine after all!" cried one woman in the crowd at the door. "Happy is the bride as the sun shines on, as the saying is. Not but that I've known them as the sun did shine on pretty free to have their troubles; so that ain't much to go by. Marriage is a lottery, I say, and let them contradict as can. Some of us find it so, I reckon. But who the dickens are they?"

"Them as are goin' to be spliced? Blest if I know!" replied the person addressed.

"You are out of it, then," said a third woman. "Why, the bride is Miss Fane Capell, niece of the rich East Indian merchant, as has ships and things everywhere; and the bridegroom is the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton, son of Viscount Clapham, and grand nephew of the Duke of Wandsworth."

The titles were rolled out with peculiar gusto, and elicited from the hearers a chorus of satirical "Oh, laws!"

"His brother, you mean," corrected another bystander. "The old viscount is dead."

"Who said he wasn't?" retorted the former speaker, nettled at the way her information had been received. "He was alive once, I suppose, and this young man was his son, although there is an older one. I should have told all about it if some folks hadn't been so jolly quick. Few people know more about the Claphams than I do. They ain't so well off as they might be. The one as is to be married to-day will never have half as much as his bride. But, law! I wish I'd got as many half-crowns as he's got sovereigns—I'd never do a hand's turn again—you may lay your life on that. I know what I'm saying; for my sister's daughter— But, lawks, there he is! That's him!"

The "him" referred to was the bridegroom, who at that moment drove up with his attendant groomsmen. Tall, stalwart, dark-haired, young, and handsome, he looked an ideal bridegroom.

"Yes, that's him; and he's handsome, ain't he?" continued the speaker, in tones loud enough to reach the ears of the object of her remarks.

"'Andsome is as 'andsome does, I allus says," came from another woman.

"Who said it wasn't? That's his mother in violet satin. That material would stand on end with richness. I ought to know; for my cousin——"

"Will you tell me, if it please you, whose wedding this is?—who is this day to be married, my good woman?" interrupted a foreign-looking man of about thirty or thirty-five years of age, who, with an elderly lady dressed in black, had forced his way to the front of the crowd, amid cries of: "Who are you? What are you pushing for?"

The man was dark, with black hair, and heavy moustache. His features were handsome; but he had a rakish, dissipated

look, and his clothes, although well made and of good material, were rather worn and shabby. The woman was also dark, but much older; she was better dressed, and short and slight in figure.

Although by no means as good-looking as the man, there was sufficient resemblance between them to suggest a near relationship. But while there was a certain deliberation in his movements and in his way of speaking, hers were characterised by an appearance of restless eagerness. She spoke quickly, and gesticulated much.

To an observant person the same kind of difference would have been apparent in their eyes. His were cold, calculating, cruel; hers were malicious, restless, eager. Both the man and the woman would relentlessly pursue any course they had determined to follow; but their methods for attaining the ends they had in view would be different.

"Yes, good woman, whose marriage said you this was just to happen?" she asked, clutching the arm of the woman whose anxiety to show her intimate knowledge of the high contracting parties had attracted attention.

"I didn't know as I was your good woman—either of you," was the reply. "And don't think as you are goin' to stand in front of me—because you're not; so there! It's what I calls cheek. I've been here this half hour, blest if I ain't! But furrinating folks think anything is becoming, I reckon."

"We do not wish to stand in front of you. But you seem to know the people. Will you not answer a question—which is civil?" said the man. "Said you it was Miss Fane Capell who is to be married—the niece of the great Indian merchant?"

"*Oui, oui; le négociant*—the great merchant?" added the lady eagerly.

"Yes; I did say it was that young lady as is the bride, and I'm not going from it. Why, my cousin's daughter, as ever was, helped to make the dresses; and I say it's a burnin' shame as I can't get inside the church. Why, there ain't anybody as—"

"So! Mees Fane Capell—Adeliza Fane Capell—of what you call Capell Manor in Devonshire. That is the *comté*?" interrupted the lady, with increasing agitation and eagerness.

"Well, that's her uncle's place, I believe; and I ought to know," replied the informant, evidently rather proud of the position she was filling. "But don't clutch my arm like that," she added suddenly. "Do you

want to limb me? I shall be black and blue. I should think you are took worse!"

There was a general laugh, and the lady released her eager grasp. She drew back, and said something in an undertone and in a foreign language to the man. They then elbowed their way, in spite of a good deal of remonstrance, jeering, and even some threats, into the open passage between the lines of spectators, and walked up the crimson carpet to the door of the church. Here they were met by the officious verger, who attempted to bar further progress.

"The church is full; you can't come in."

The woman, however, darted past him on the one side, while the man gave him an impatient push on the other; and they both entered the church. The crowd was amused, and there was a loud laugh. The verger, with a very red face, followed the recalcitrant pair. They had taken up their stand in a rather dark corner of the building, near the font. Full of offended dignity, the verger strutted up to them.

"You must come out of this!" he said.

"We can't hev folks stannin' 'ere!"

"Get away, silly man! Here shall we stay!" the lady almost hissed.

"I tell you, you must get out!"

"Get away!"

Just then there was a commotion at the door of the church, caused by the arrival of the bride, and the verger was obliged to move away.

Beautiful, exceedingly tall and graceful, with abundant hair of red gold, now veiled by delicate lace, with large eyes of a deep violet blue, now downcast and shaded by their drooping lashes, with oval face of the most delicate fairness, small rosebud mouth and teeth of pearl, the bride came, richly-dressed, attended by a bevy of fair maidens, and with her splendid train borne by two dainty little pages, clad in white satin. It was a lovely vision; but it had a curious effect upon two of the spectators.

"*Voilà! Là! là! C'est vrai! Oui, sans doute,*" said the foreign-looking woman, in a quick, excited whisper. "*Maintenant, Victor—*"

She made a step forward, but the man drew her back.

"Attendez!" he said.

The procession passed on. The bridal party was arranged at the altar, where two clergymen were already in attendance; and the service commenced. A ray of sunlight falling through a painted window threw a glory upon the bride.

An involuntary but subdued murmur of admiration ran through the church; but the elderly lady near the font only appeared to grow more and more excited, until her whispers and gestures attracted the attention of the people near.

A dark frown was on the man's face:

"*Chut! Silence! Paix! Peste! Attendez!*" he growled.

"Therefore," said the solemn and monotonous voice of the clergyman, "if any man can show any just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace."

There was a slight pause, and in that pause the woman uttered a louder exclamation—an exclamation which drew the eyes of the whole church towards the spot where she was standing.

"*Mille tonnerres!*" muttered the man, putting his hand to her mouth, and dragging her back into the gloom of the corner.

The bride grew deathly pale; there came a frightened, hunted look into her eyes, visible even beneath her veil; and she seemed about to swoon. The bridegroom put out his arm to support her; bridesmaids and guests gathered round in alarm; but by a great effort she appeared to regain her composure:

After a somewhat lengthened pause, the clergyman repeated the charge; and there being no further interruption, the service continued. The bride's responses were so faint that the clergyman had to bend his head to catch the words; but the bridegroom spoke out in a clear, distinct voice, audible in every part of the building.

When the ceremony was over, and the bridal party adjourned to the vestry, the bride was still pale, but apparently self-possessed. The new-made husband whispered some loving words in her ear, and she replied with a faint smile:

Mr. Fane Capell, a stout, red-faced, white-haired man, with bland, fussy, consequential manners, was speaking to the clergyman:

"Most extraordinary!" he said. "Who could it have been?"

"Some excited female, I expect," was the reply. "You have no idea, my dear sir, how excited some women get over a wedding. I have known a woman to go into hysterics—violent hysterics—simply through witnessing the marriage of some person of whom she knew absolutely nothing. Human nature, and especially female human nature"—

lowering his voice—"is a queer thing. Of course," he added seriously, "had the cry been repeated, it might have been necessary to interrupt the ceremony until the matter was explained."

"My dear Archdeacon," began Mr. Capell:

"Oh, of course, it was nothing, as I have just said. And it is over now. I must congratulate the happy pair."

"I should like to know who it was," persisted Mr. Capell, who never knew when to let a subject drop. Besides, he was indignant at the bare notion of stopping the marriage. "It was an extraordinary cry: It sounded to me like some foreign word: I couldn't make it out at all. Most strange—extraordinary!"

"I will question the verger; he may know something," said the clergyman.

The verger was summoned.

"Bopple, do you know who uttered that peculiar cry during the service? Did you see the person?"

"Yes, sir; I had my eye on that there party," answered Bopple respectfully. "It were a man and woman, sir, as would come in: They give me the slip, sir, they did, with their imperence; and if it hadn't been for disturbing the congregation, I'd 'ave 'ad 'em out, I would."

"What were they like?"

"Well, sir, the woman was a elderly party, and all on springs, as one may say—very excitable like. The man tried to keep her quiet; but she it was as hollered out; and after her cry, as you was pleased to remark, they disappeared. In other words, he dragged her out at the south door, which was a good riddance, sir."

"As I thought, some excitable female who, remembering her own wedding, could not keep her feelings under control," said the archdeacon. "That will do, Bopple, if you know no more."

He turned to speak to the bride. A close observer would have imagined that she had been endeavouring to listen to the above conversation. She evidently scarcely heard the words which were being addressed to her; her eyes were distended; there was a look of absolute terror in them: Her hands shook slightly.

"What were you saying about the people in the church?" she asked, addressing the clergyman:

"We were only asking Bopple, the verger, if he knew who created that little disturbance at the beginning of the service. You will allow me to offer my hearty congratulations

and my best wishes for your happiness, Mrs. Wilgorton," continued the archdeacon. "I am sure I never——"

"But the person—who was it?" she interrupted.

"Some excitable woman, my dear Mrs. Wilgorton. There was a man with her, I am told, who tried to keep her quiet."

"And the man——?"

"My darling, do not trouble about the man or the woman," said the new-made husband. "Mine now—mine for ever!" he whispered fondly.

She shivered.

"Some wandering lunatics," remarked Mr. Capell. "How white you look, Adeliza! Come, come, this won't do! Let us go. Are we all ready? You had nothing to eat this morning; and I feel an inward vacuum; and Nature abhors a vacuum, we are told. I am decidedly peckish," he added jocularly.

It was the time when the breakfast was one of the important functions of a wedding.

"The poor child is sure to look white," said Mrs. Capell, a thin, discontented-looking woman. "It is a serious time in a girl's life—only a woman can realise how serious. I shall never forget my own wedding morning. I was compared with a drooping lily." She looked at present more like a withered crocus. "There, men will never understand. Their one panacea for everything—their chief idea of comfort—is eating."

These remarks were addressed to no one in particular, and no one took any notice of them, except Lady Clapham, the stately mother of the bridegroom. This lady put up her gold eye-glass and silently stared at the speaker.

The bridal-party issued from the vestry, and passed in procession down the broad aisle of the church. The bride glanced nervously from side to side as they walked between the two lines of spectators, who still lingered. As she stepped into the carriage, she gave a violent start; the little tinge of colour which had come back to her face fled again, leaving her ghastly pale, and she was trembling in every limb when she sank back amongst the cushions.

In vain her husband implored her to tell him what had distressed her. At first the only answer he could get was a wild stare; then she roused herself a little, and in faltering tones assured him that she was only rather unwell, but would be better presently. Seriously alarmed, he spoke of a doctor;

but she repeated that she was not really ill, and most earnestly begged him to say nothing about it.

She seemed to shrink from his caresses. He was perplexed, troubled, and disappointed. He could not understand her mood. Illness even would not account for it. He was naturally of a warm, ardent disposition. He loved her passionately, and he believed she returned his love—that the marriage was on her side, as on his, one of pure affection.

And now, when he had a greater right than ever to the indulgence of a lover's raptures, she sat in the carriage like a marble statue—almost motionless; for the trembling had ceased, except for a shiver which now and then shook her frame. However ill she might be, or if only unduly excited, why did she shrink from his loving touch? He would have given his life for her; and she actually recoiled from him.

Finding that his affectionate efforts to rouse her were not only quite unsuccessful, but evidently positively distressing to her, he desisted, and with folded arms leant moodily back in a corner of the carriage: Thus they passed through the busy streets to the large West-end mansion of Mr. Fane Capell. Truly a strange beginning to a married life.

Upon their arrival at the house, the bride at once retired to her own room, and here she begged so earnestly to be left alone for a short time that her aunt and other friends felt compelled to acquiesce in her wishes.

The wedding guests were embarrassed and perplexed. The bridegroom stood, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, looking gloomily from the dining-room window, but seeing nothing. His best man, an old college friend to whom he was much attached, went up to him, and put his arm affectionately through his.

"Come, Wilgorton; you are wanted."

"What does it all mean?" demanded the bridegroom suddenly. "You know what I mean. Everybody can see there is something amiss."

"My dear fellow, it will be all right. Mrs. Wilgorton's nerves are a little upset. I daresay it is a trying time for a girl, however happy she may be; and perhaps we don't quite understand girls, either. For her sake, and for your own, old chap, look as though it were all right, as I am sure it will be, never fear."

"You are right, Whinstone, at any rate: I am a fool! Here goes!"

He turned and made some light remark to another friend standing near; and was soon moving from group to group, receiving congratulations, and chatting with forced gaiety. Mrs. Capell appeared at the door of the room, and motioned to him. He crossed over to her.

"I really cannot think what is the matter with Adeliza," she said. "She has locked her door, and refuses to come down to breakfast. What will people say? I never heard of a wedding breakfast and the bride locked in her own room. You know, she ought to cut the cake. You go and knock at her door. You are her husband now, and ought to do such things. Perhaps she will come down for you. If she is ill, we must send for a doctor."

He made no reply, and with many misgivings ran upstairs, and tapped gently at his wife's door. At first no answer was returned; then, on the knock being repeated, he heard her ask, in an irritable manner, who was there.

"It is I, love. Won't you open the door to me?"

"I cannot now. Oh! if you love me, leave me alone a little while!"

"But, Adeliza——"

"Leave me! Oh, leave me!"

"Adeliza!"

"Go! Go! For Heaven's sake, go!"

He turned, and went downstairs. There was a despairing intreaty in her voice, which made his heart sink like lead. He paused a moment in the hall below; then retraced his steps, and knocked once more at his wife's door.

"Adeliza, you are ill. I shall send for the doctor."

"I will not see a doctor. Do leave me alone for a few minutes! Do!" came the answer through the closed door.

"You will come down soon, Adeliza?"

"Yes, yes."

He descended the stairs again:

"Well?" said Mrs. Capell interrogatively:

"She wishes to be alone for a little while: I think she will come down soon."

"But the carriage will be here in less than an hour to take you to the station: And she must have something to eat and drink. She will be quite faint. She declares she is not ill, and won't have a doctor."

"I know it. But we must leave her alone for a few minutes."

His heart was very heavy as he spoke:

"She ought to cut the cake. I shall send for a doctor if there is much more of it, whatever she says."

He turned away, only to meet fresh inquiries from his mother. Lady Clapham was highly displeased; there was a frown upon her brow; and she spoke coldly.

"What is the matter, Kenneth? What is the meaning of these extraordinary doings? I never saw such a change in any human countenance—such a look of absolute horror—yes, positively horror—as on that of your wife in the church. And now she hides herself from everybody. Surely you can give some explanation. If you cannot, you certainly have a right to demand an explanation from her. Something is also due to me; and to others."

"Mother, Adeliza is over-excited."

"That is nonsense, Kenneth."

"I can tell you no more. Mother, let us make the best of it."

He left her without waiting for a reply:

The breakfast passed off without much spontaneous hilarity on the part of those present. A cloud seemed to have fallen on the spirits of all. The bridesmaids looked frightened. Speeches and compliments fell flat.

Lady Clapham glared round her with such cold surprise and scorn depicted on her countenance as struck terror in the hearts of the timid, and added to the discomfort of all. Mr. Fane Capell tried in a pompous way to be jocose and merry; but his efforts, never at any time very successful in this direction, were now a dismal failure.

Mrs. Capell, as is often the case with persons who, according to their own account, never experience the vulgar feeling of hunger, made a good meal; and in the meantime discoursed upon her own feelings on her wedding day; and drew a parallel between her own extreme sensitiveness on that occasion and that displayed by her niece. Her talk served one purpose. It seemed to show that there was not much real cause for anxiety about the brides.

Wiltgorton made a strong effort to appear happy; but he ate nothing. His best man and friend did his utmost to relieve the general embarrassment; and as the breakfast proceeded, and the wine circulated, some of the guests threw off their depression, and began to talk freely:

Presently Mr. Capell looked at his watch:

"You ought to be starting soon," he said to the bridegroom:

Wilgorton left the room. For a few minutes no one else stirred, though many eyes were turned to the door. Then a servant entered, and spoke in a whisper to Mr. Capell, who also quitted the room.

A silence fell on the guests. The tension and embarrassment again became painful. Mrs. Capell was visibly anxious; and Lady Clapham looked blacker than ever.

Presently there was distinctly heard a noise like the forcing of a door, the breaking of woodwork—so quiet was the house; and the guests rose simultaneously and hurried into the hall.

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CHAPTER II:

Missing—A Bride!

TWO or three startled servants were standing in the hall, staring up the staircase. Mrs. Capell pushed them aside, and herself ran up the stairs. The door of her niece's room had been forced open.

"What is the meaning of this? Good Heavens! what does it mean?" she cried to her husband and Wilgorton, who, with white faces, appeared on the threshold.

"Adeliza's gone, Fanny!" gasped Mr. Capell.

"Gone! Gone where?"

"Run away! There is a note here to say she has run away."

"How could she run away? Where has she gone? What was there to run away from?"

"For Heaven's sake, Fanny, don't argue. She's gone—that's all we know!" exclaimed Mr. Capell, for once forgetting his pomposity. "Wilgorton found the door locked, and not only could get no answer to his questions, but could not hear anyone moving—not a sound. Her maid knew nothing. He sent for me, and after bawling at the top of our voices ever so long, we forced the door. She might have been in a dead faint, you see. She is gone, and has left this note to say she's gone. It is an astounding mystery to us."

All was confusion: The unfortunate young husband was overwhelmed with consternation and distress. After a few agitated words to his mother, who stood looking on with a stony stare, as though she had seen the Gorgon's head, he retired with Mr. Capell to discuss the serious situation, so far as he was able in his distracted condition to discuss it. His friend, Whinstone, was called in to assist in the

conference. The less intimate of the wedding guests, full of wonder and dismay, began to take their departure.

"What an extraordinary young person your niece must be!" remarked Lady Clapham to Mrs. Capell. "I trust there is not insanity in the family."

"Really, Lady Clapham!"

"Well, what is one to think?"

"We cannot account for what has happened any more than you can. We had no reason to think the marriage was distasteful to Adeliza."

"Distasteful!" repeated Lady Clapham with hauteur. "Certainly not. Few young ladies in her position have been so fortunate. I may have had misgivings about such an alliance."

"May I ask what you mean about such an alliance?" demanded Mrs. Capell with asperity. "You were as anxious as anybody for it."

Lady Clapham bit her lip. She had not intended to say exactly what she had said; but she, nevertheless, gave Mrs. Capell a look which she considered sufficient to wither up any mere merchant's wife; and saying she feared she could be no help in the extraordinary and perplexing circumstances which had arisen, asked for her carriage. In a few minutes she had driven away.

Mrs. Capell hurried to the library, where her husband was in agitated consultation with Wilgorton and his friend.

"You are all sitting here, instead of fetching the silly girl back!" she cried.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Capell was the only one seated. The bridegroom was walking backwards and forwards with disordered steps; Whinstone was standing by the library table.

"Where are we to fetch her from?" demanded Mr. Capell. "Fanny, do be reasonable! We are suffering enough already from the caprices of your sex."

"Oh, of course, my sex! Turn it upon me!"

"Yes; your sex, madam: The idea of a young lady brought up in the careful manner and in the sound principles Adeliza was brought up in, accompanying a distinguished member of Society to the hymeneal altar, as one may say, and actually being married to him; then, running away! What will the world say? It will say that either she is mad, or that she was forced into a marriage abhorrent to her. A pretty thing, truly!"

"I know all that: Let me see the note she left."

"It is addressed to her husband—the Honourable Mr. Wilgorton—I am bound to say a much ill-used gentleman," said Mr. Capell.

"What can it mean? Here is the note, Mrs. Capell," said Wilgorton, handing the paper to her.

The note itself showed signs of extreme agitation: It was hurriedly written, and in places so blotted and blistered, evidently with tears, as to be almost illegible. It was brief, and ran thus:—

MY DEAREST KENNETH,—I am going away. Circumstances have arisen to show me that I cannot—dare not—live with you as your wife. You will hate and despise me, and that knowledge is hard to bear. But I deserve it all. I cannot explain. You will probably know everything soon. Whatever you do, do not try to find me! I cannot be your wife. I cannot even see you again. But I pray Heaven to bless and keep you! I have not time to write to my uncle and aunt. Let them see this. I have wronged them also. They will never forgive me.

ADELIZA.

"Well, I never heard of such a thing!" ejaculated Mrs. Capell. "Of all things in the world! Of course, she really must be mad! Forgive her, indeed! Who could forgive her?"

"Goodness knows I have no wish for an unwilling bride," said Wilgorton, in a broken voice. "I have deceived myself. I believed she fully returned my affection; and I was prepared to devote my whole life to her happiness. Only yesterday we were so happy: How can the change have come about? How can she so suddenly have discovered that she has mistaken her feelings? She speaks of circumstances. What can she mean?"

"It is hard for you—it is hard and trying for us all—and I think her note is ridiculous. If there were no circumstances such as she alludes to before we went to church, there can be none now. But I don't see why Lady Clapham need have been so rude—and she was positively rude, if you will excuse my mentioning it," returned Mrs. Capell.

"I think it is a case of temporary mental aberration," said her husband. "Of course, everybody knows there is no weakness of that kind in my family: But what else can it be?"

"And I am thankful to say she is your own niece, and my family can't be brought in," said Mrs. Capell.

"One can never understand these things," pursued the merchant:

"Is she subject to hysteria?" Whinstone asked in a low voice.

"Oh, no, no, no; quite the reverse."

"She must be found. She must be brought back. We are wasting time: It is useless talking!" said Wilgorton, hurrying to the door.

"Stop a moment, my dear sir!" cried Mr. Capell. "Of course she must be found and brought back. And then we will soon overcome this nonsense, and make things right. She will be sorry enough herself for what has happened. But where is she—where has she gone? She can't have gone far; but where? That's the point—that's the point!"

"If I might suggest, I think it would be well to question the servants—her maid, certainly. Ken, old fellow, do wait a minute or two. The maid may know something. Someone must have seen her leave the house."

"My dear sir, your suggestion is admirable, disagreeable as is the idea of admitting servants to one's confidence," replied Mr. Capell. "I'll ring. Perks said she knew nothing; but you can never tell with this kind of people."

"They only know when it is to their interest to know," added Mrs. Capell.

The maid, a smartly-dressed and rather pert-looking young person, with a profusion of dark hair, which she wore in a coquettish style, was summoned.

"Perks," said Mr. Capell, expanding his chest, putting his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and endeavouring to hide his anxiety under an increased pomposity of manner, "perhaps you are aware that your young lady has left the house in a somewhat unaccountable manner? Doubtless she will return very soon: But did she happen to mention in your presence where she was going?"

"Well, sir, it was like this——" began Perks in a mysterious whisper.

"We don't want to know what it was like: Answer the question as briefly as you can," interrupted the merchant.

"Which I was going to do, if I may make so bold," said Perks in an injured tone: "When my young lady, Miss Fane Capell as was, came in from the church, I was laying the travelling dress out: She was very agitated, as was quite natural. What young lady, as was a lady, wouldn't be, under circumstances so trying, if so——"

"For Heaven's sake, answer Mr. Capell's question, woman!" exclaimed Wilgorton:

No woman likes to be addressed as "woman"; and Perks was not an exception:

"I has my feelings, and I have never been used to such manners," she said in the servants' hall afterwards. She bridled a little now; but when she raised her dark eyes to the agitated face of the speaker, and saw the trouble depicted there, pity overcame every other feeling. She pursued her story; but, still, with a fair amount of composure.

"My young lady asked me to leave the room, seeming in a state of desperation all the time; but I knew my duty too well for that, and so I waited to help her off with her bridal veil. Then she spoke up again so sharp that I had to go; but I was uneasy, and so——"

"You looked through the keyhole, and listened, I dare say. Go on," put in Mrs. Capell.

"Seeing, ma'am, that the key was in the lock, looking through wouldn't have been much use. But she might have been going to faint, or something, which would have been awkward—and she all alone—and so I kept near the door."

"Well, well?" said Wilgorton.

"Go on, please," said Whinstone.

"Proceed, proceed, Perks. What are you waiting for?" added Mr. Capell, while his wife glared at the maid.

"Well, she threw off the lovely veil and wreath and the other beautiful things in a heap on the bed. I found them so. Then in a desperate hurry, as one may say, for it must have been that, she put on a plain dark dress—not the lovely pearl-grey travelling dress which was all ready—but a brown dress. Handsome it is, of course, as all her things are; but not suitable for the occasion, as is the pearl-grey."

Wilgorton groaned; Mr. Capell's red face became redder with anger; Mrs. Capell made a gesture of disgusted impatience; and Whinstone said encouragingly:

"Yes, a brown dress."

"My young lady put some things in a little hand-bag, as I also happen to know, and wrote a letter. Then she came out—like a living corpse she was—and she says to me, in a queer sort of voice—so hollow like: 'You here, Perks! Faithful you are to me, and always have been. I'm going away,' she says; 'but not a word about it to a living soul, until they find I'm gone, as you value my affection.' I began to say something; but she gave me a look I shall never forget to my dying day—not if I live

to be ten thousand—and went away. What could I do? I was flabbergasted, so to speak. I have assisted at weddings before; but never one like this. Besides, you came directly and bursted the door, which she had locked again, and taken the key."

"Is that all you know?" demanded Mr. Capell.

"That is all, sir."

"Why didn't you come to me with this story at once?"

"After her asking me so earnest to say nothing until later, sir?"

"How long was this before Mr. Wilgorton and Mr. Capell went upstairs?" interposed Whinstone.

"I was too much upset to take much notice of time," replied Perks reproachfully; "and, besides, I hadn't my watch. But I should think it was ten minutes—might be only five."

"You did very wrong indeed not to come to me immediately," said Mr. Capell severely. "Are you sure you are concealing nothing now?"

"Sir!"

"By which door did your mistress leave the house?" Whinstone asked. "Excuse me," he added, turning to Mr. Capell.

"She went out at the front," answered Perks. "You see, sir, everybody was in the dining-room, and not expecting anything like that."

"Did none of your fellow-servants see her?"

"Not as I am aware."

"And you know nothing more?"

"I know my young lady took money with her, and some jewellery—though not the wedding presents—any of them."

Other questions were asked. Some amount of cross-questioning was resorted to; but nothing further could be elicited from her, and Perks was dismissed: What was to be done? The whole affair was so mysterious, so extraordinary, that no one knew what suggestion to make.

The missing bride was an orphan: Her parents had been dead about ten years, and since their decease she had been under the guardianship of her uncle and aunt: Mr. Fane Capell was her father's elder brother. Adeliza had a moderate income of her own; but her uncle was rich and childless; and it was generally understood that she would be his heiress. He had already settled a very handsome sum upon her as a dowry.

About three years before this story

opens she had left the school in Paris, where her uncle had placed her to complete her education, and had taken up her abode in his house. Her engagement and marriage to Kenneth Wilgorton had always been supposed to be the result of mutual love. No pressure whatever had been brought to bear upon her in the matter, although the marriage was very pleasing to her relatives. They liked Wilgorton, and they were delighted at the idea of their niece being styled "Honourable," and with the possibility of her becoming a viscountess.

Kenneth's friends had also looked on the alliance with some degree of favour. They were not overburdened with wealth; and if the bride was not all that could be desired in point of birth, the solid advantages promised by the marriage were some compensation.

During the courtship there had been times when the fair Adeliza's manner had puzzled her lover—when she had seemed distressed and anxious—when she had even appeared to shrink from him. But lately all this had passed away; everything had been bright and hopeful, and she had seemed as happy as any girl about to marry the man of her choice and with a brilliant future before her could be.

What, then, could be the meaning of her present extraordinary conduct? A girl's mad whim, or wild caprice, could not explain it.

In addition to his surprise and distress, Kenneth Wilgorton also naturally felt keenly the ridiculous position in which he was placed. To be married, and yet not married. To stand before the world as a forsaken husband—forsaken by his wife before one single hour of married life had passed over his head, was too absurd!

Most men are sensitive to ridicule, when they themselves are its object; and he was particularly sensitive. He was quite aware of the ill-natured things which would be said about the affair; and how some people calling themselves his friends would enjoy saying these things.

Even if there had been anything disreputable in his past, anything which might cause a pure-minded and high-spirited girl to refuse to live with him as his wife—and there was certainly no such thing—it seemed impossible that she could have heard of it after leaving her home for the church. Besides which, in her note she laid all the blame upon herself for what had happened:

What people said was, of course, a small matter compared with the real trouble. The foolish girl herself—in how false a position she was placed by her own wild act! So far it had not occurred to anyone that any serious danger threatened her.

Her uncle had spoken of mental aberration; but, in reality, she was not at all the person to suddenly go mad, and in a fit of madness to commit suicide. Moreover, she had taken money with her, which seemed to prove that she did not contemplate such a dreadful step. Mrs. Capell, however, suggested it.

"There is no accounting for people nowadays," she said. "I can't think what the world is coming to. People go mad, and hang, drown, or poison themselves on the shortest notice, and for nothing at all."

"I don't think anything of that kind is at all likely," said her husband. "We are all friends here," he went on; "and so I can speak plainly. Do you think, Wilgorton—pardon me—that she can have heard anything—well—against you, you know—which can have driven her to this step? She is a peculiar girl. Girls are peculiar—many of them. Of course, I don't mean that there can be anything."

"My character will bear looking into as well as most men's," replied Wilgorton; "and, surely, if she had heard anything against me, she would have trusted me sufficiently to allow me an opportunity of defending myself?"

"Certainly; we may dismiss that from our minds," said Whinstone warmly. "We all know Wilgorton. Besides that, Mrs. Wilgorton had no communication with anyone after going to church—and she was all right then—unless, indeed, she received a letter after reaching home."

"We will soon find that out," said Capell. "My dear Wilgorton, do compose yourself a few minutes. All these inquiries are necessary before we can do anything. We will have Perks in again."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and on Mr. Capell calling out "Come in," Perks herself appeared, dragging by the arm a fat and evidently reluctant page boy, attired in the tightest of uniforms, liberally besprinkled with shining buttons.

"If you please, sir and ma'am," said Perks, "Mullins knows something."

"Oh, indeed! Now, Mullins, what do you know?" demanded his master. "Stand up and speak out."

"I don't know nothing much, sir,"

replied the page, wrenching himself from the grasp of Perks, and pulling his hair at the front.

"Tell us what you do know this moment: Now, quick! Speak out, and don't be afraid!"

But Mullins appeared confused, and the impatient shake his irascible master administered did not improve matters.

"Come, come, my lad," said Whinstone:

"Yes, yes, sir, I will; but it ain't much; and Perks, she confuses one like. I saw Miss Adeliza go out of the house very pale like, as I was carrying some glasses. I says to myself: 'It's queer,' and without meanin' to watch, I looked out of the window by the side of the door. There was a man lookin' up at the house, on the other side of the road. He saw her, and he up and followed her. Leastways, it seems to me so. And that's all. And, please, sir, I'd have spoke before if desired, only Perks——"

"A man! What man? How do you know he followed her? What was he like?" were some of the questions showered upon the perplexed Mullins.

"I was lookin' through the window in the 'all when I seed him, and I says to James, as was nigh me: 'Look at that cove.' I beg your pardon, ma'am and gentlemen, but that's what I said, because he stood in a doorway, seemin' to watch the house."

"What do you mean by seemin'? Are you certain? Now, mind!" said Mr. Capell.

"Yes; certain sure, sir."

"What was he like?"

"He looked like a gent as had seen better days, I should think. He was dark like, with a big moustache."

"You say he seemed to follow Mrs. Wilgorton?"

It was Whinstone who asked this question: Wilgorton was apparently too dumfounded to speak.

"Well, sir, so it 'peared to me, sir: Fact, I'm pretty sure he did."

"Did she appear to see him?"

"I don't know, sir. She didn't turn round as long as I could see. She sort of ran."

"Of course, she did not turn round. It is too absurd. There is nothing in all this. Boy, you had better not repeat this silly tale to anyone!"

"Certainly not, certainly not, as he values his place. Most ridiculous!" said Mr. Capell. "Mullins, if you know no more, you can go. Most ridiculous! Worse than ridiculous!"

Perks and Mullins retired, a little crest-fallen:

"I thought it best to speak as I did," said Whinstone. "A little encouragement and we know not what reports the lad might have set afloat."

"And may set afloat now," said Mrs. Capell. "You can never trust servants."

"You were quite right—quite right, Mr. Whinstone," said the merchant; while Kenneth pressed his friend's arm: "And, of course, it is ridiculous."

"But we are no nearer knowing what to do," remarked Mrs. Capell.

"Under the circumstances, every little incident is of importance," observed Whinstone. "There was a slight interruption to the ceremony this morning. Did anyone see who caused the interruption?"

"It was a crazy old woman," answered Mr. Capell.

"How do you know? Did you see her?" asked his wife.

"No; but the archdeacon and I questioned the verger; and he told some cock-and-bull story about an old woman and a man. I am afraid we have been very discourteous to our guests. I have not seen the archdeacon, or indeed anyone else, since I left the breakfast-room."

"Oh, we can't trouble about that now: They will understand," said Mrs. Capell.

"There was a man with this woman, then?" said Whinstone.

"Yes; the verger said so."

"Did he give any description of the man?"

"No; I did not think to ask him: I remember he said the woman was elderly: But, surely, my dear Mr. Whinstone, you cannot imagine that these people, whoever they were, had anything to do with what I acknowledge to be strange conduct on the part of my niece?"

"No; I should be sorry to infer anything of the kind, Mr. Capell. But the circumstances are so unprecedented that it seems to me it would be wise to consider every little incident."

"Well, perhaps," was the cold response:

Some further discussion followed—discussion in which various opinions were expressed and suggestions made; but which did nothing to really elucidate the mystery: Whinstone said nothing more about the man and woman in the church; and presently the party separated, each to visit some place, likely or unlikely, where the missing lady might have gone. If after such

efforts as they could make nothing was heard of her, other steps must be taken—perhaps even the aid of the police called in: This was an alternative only to be used as a last resource.

Kenneth Wilgorton looked painfully haggard and careworn as he left the house with his friend Whinstone; very different indeed from the happy and handsome young bridegroom of the morning.

"There is one thing to be done," said Mrs. Capell. "The carriage must be sent away. So long as that is at the door, there will be a gaping crowd waiting to see what they can see: I wonder nobody thought of that; but, there, nobody ever does think. What can Adeliza mean? This comes of taking other people's children to bring up. I never heard of such a thing in all my life, nor anybody else. Lady Clapham need not have been so rude to me. With all her haughtiness, she was glad enough to get Adeliza for her poverty-stricken son. The idea of being rude!"

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CHAPTER III:

An Early Clue.

MRS. CAPELL was quite right. A small crowd, with that dogged perseverance so characteristic of the British sightseer, still lingered round the door, evidently awaiting the appearance of the bride and bridegroom. Wilgorton was instantly recognised.

"That's 'im!" cried one woman. "How white he looks, to be sure! And the idea of all the others going off first! But where's she?"

Leaving the house alone, and in the plain dark dress she had put on, so different from her bridal array, Adeliza had evidently passed unnoticed.

"'E looks white about the gills, 'e do!" remarked a man. "'E's a fine specimen of a bridegroom, 'e is, if that's 'im. 'E don't look as if——"

A coarse jest followed, which called forth some laughter from the crowd; some of the more decent members of which, however, said: "Hush! Shut your mouth!"

"In the name of Heaven, what does it all mean?" said Wilgorton, clutching his friend's arm.

"Kenneth, old fellow, try to bear up. It will all come right. It is bound to come right. Perhaps it is only a mad prank to try you."

"Why to try me? What for? I don't understand!"

"No; we don't understand girls, you see: Do you know of any friend to whom she would be likely to go? Think well."

"No, no, I do not. Why should she go at all? Whinstone, what did you mean about the man in the church?" he added fiercely. "It was at the moment when somebody called out that the change in her took place. In the name of Heaven, what do you suspect?"

"I do not suspect anything. I know nothing more than you do. I tell you—this is probably only some mad prank: Let me persuade you, old fellow, to go home and change your clothes. You can't go rushing about London in search of your wife in your wedding toggery."

"I had forgotten my clothes. But what does it matter?"

"I would change them, if I were you. You see, these people recognised you. In the meantime I will do my utmost. Indeed, if you would stay at home it would be all the better. You know you can rely upon Capell and me to do our best; and you shall see me with some news a little later."

"How can I stay at home? You would not do it yourself, if positions were changed."

Whinstone spoke with more confidence than he felt, and eventually induced Wilgorton to go home and, at any rate, change his clothes. He accompanied him to the door of Lady Clapham's house, and then left him.

Whinstone wished to be alone in order to institute certain inquiries, which he deemed it best not to mention at present to his harassed and sorely-tried friend. He hailed a hansom and drove to the church where the wedding had taken place that morning. He found it locked up; but from the notice board ascertained the address of the verger. He wished to have an interview with that individual.

Somewhat in the rear of the church was a narrow, gloomy street, most of the buildings in which were used as offices of various kinds, although from the deserted appearance of the street little business seemed to be done in them.

Mr. Bopple, who, assisted by his wife, united to his ecclesiastical duties that of caretaker of one of these offices, was seated with his family in a back sitting-room, which looked out upon a small, paved yard, ornamented with a water-butt: A few sickly plants, drawing a precarious existence

from the soil placed in a box outside the window, did very little to enliven the dismal apartment. There was a strong smell of onions about him as, on being informed by a boy who answered Whinstone's ring at the bell that he was wanted, the worthy verger stepped out into the dark passage leading to the back premises.

"Your name is Bopple, I believe? You are verger at St. Clement's? I want a few words with you, if you please," said Whinstone.

"Bopple is my name, sir. I don't deny it: Why, you are one of the gents as was at the wedding; blest if you ain't! excuse me," replied the verger. "Anything wrong?" he went on, in an aggrieved tone.

"I want to ask you a few questions."

"Well, I'm sorry I've nowhere to ask you except into our sitting-room; but it don't matter, if you don't mind. Come in; we're at tea. P'raps you'd take a cup?"

Whinstone politely declined.

"Just so. As you like, of course. I'm indulging in onions, as there's no more services to-day. I can't do it, much as I like 'em, when there is a service, as the old ladies objects to the smell, just as if I'd got to kiss 'em. But they hev their fads, like most of us. Mrs. Bopple, sir."

The lady indicated, a tall, thin, cadaverous-looking woman, bowed somewhat ungraciously; but placed a chair for the visitor; while the young Bopples, three in number, with thick pieces of bread-and-butter in their hands, stared open-mouthed at him.

"Can I speak to you in private?"

"I should think a man's private sitting-room, where's he's at tea, is private enough, if you awsk me," said Mrs. Bopple grimly, and speaking with a strong Cockney accent, difficult to imitate in all its peculiarities. "If I'm objected to, in course I can retire to the bedroom—not livin', owin' to circumstances over which I've no control, in quite a pallice. My tea may get cold; but I can make fresh tea, no doubt. The children, though too young to listen to secrets, can go with me."

"I am sorry to inconvenience you, Mrs. Bopple. I want to ask your husband a few questions. I will not detain him many minutes."

"Which questions he will repeat to me as soon as you hev gone, if I don't hear 'em now. Secrets between man and wife I never did approve of—and never will. Tommy, touch the winkles, if you dare!"

"My dear!" remonstrated Mr. Bopple, glancing at the visitor.

The lady pressed her lips together: Whinstone saw that further hesitation was useless. Mrs. Bopple was determined to hear what he had to say:

"A certain man and woman behaved in a peculiar manner in the church this morning—at the wedding, you know. I am told it was a man and woman. They caused some slight interruption to the service. You noticed them particularly, I believe: I want you to describe them—to tell me all you know about them."

"They was after no good, sir. People as defy the officers of the church can't be after no good. I certainly 'ad my eye on 'em, I 'ad."

"But what were they like in appearance? What did they say and do? I am very interested. I shall be much obliged if you will tell me all you can."

Mr. Bopple began a roundabout tale concerning the audacity of the strangers in slipping into the already crowded church in spite of his efforts to prevent them; and he repeated the rather vague description he had already given of them to Mr. Capell. Mrs. Bopple sniffed significantly from time to time while her lord was speaking.

"Is that all you know? Can you tell me no more? When the woman called out at the beginning of the service, what did she say?"

"I had my dooties to perform, and wasn't nigh her just then. I didn't rightly hear what she said. Except for disturbin' the congregation, I'd hev had 'em out before that. My wife 'ere might tell you something more."

"Mrs. Bopple, I should be much obliged if you could supply any further particulars about these people."

"Oh, yes; certainly. But I thought it was a strictly private interview with my 'usband as you wanted. P'raps, however, you are beginnin' to see, sir, as you made a slight mistake in that wish."

"Hang the woman!" muttered Whinstone to himself.

"I beg your pardon; did you speak? No? Well, all I can say is this, if you awsk me, when a party wants information about things, it is not allus wise to attempt to go over the 'eads of the women to get it."

"My dear madam, I had no objection to you hearing my business: I only feared I

should be interrupting your enjoyment of your tea, and that if your husband and I retired to another apartment——”

“Oh, jest so; that’s kind. I don’t know what your object in makin’ these inquiries may be—there seems to be something mysterious about it—but this I do know. I don’t usually beat about the bush, as the sayin’ is. I’m pretty straight myself, and I like others to be. Tommy, didn’t I tell you not to touch the winkles?—no; nor the onions. Let me catch any of you at it again, that’s all!”

“I think, Mrs. Bopple, there is nothing mysterious in my asking a few questions concerning the persons who made themselves so conspicuous this morning. I was a guest at the wedding, and I am an intimate friend of the Honourable Mr. Wilgorton.”

“Oh, indeed! Of course, I didn’t know that, not being in the same spear. I will tell you what I know. Well, I was in the church, it hein’ a weddin’. I was close to the people you are so interested in, and, seein’ how curious they was, I watched them: Their conduct was disgraceful, if you awsk me; it was. They talked and muttered, and muttered and talked, for all the world like agitated ‘eathens, especially the old party, while the clergyman—and he a arch-deacon—was speaking them solemn words, as is such a lesson. Sometimes it was in a foreign langwidge as they spoke; and then, although the man tried to prevent ‘er, the elderly party ‘ollered out.”

“The man tried to prevent the woman from crying out?”

“Yes; ‘e did so.”

“Do you know what she said when she cried out?”

“No; not if you’d crown me. I was well brought up, and ‘ad good schoolin’. We in the church hev to be well brought up. But I confess to not knowin’ every langwidge under the sun, nor yet bein’ a walkin’ dictionary. I know she was excited, and it was about the bride. It’s my opinion, if you awsk me, that she wanted to stop the marriage. He was excited, too; but ‘e pulled her out of the church by the little door at the side. And what did I do, but up and foller ‘em.”

“And then?”

“And then they went at it ‘ammer and tongs, as they say; and the man said in English ‘e wouldn’t stop it; but whether ‘e meant the rowin’ or the weddin’, I leave you to guess for yourself. Then they jabbered in their own lingo, I should judge:

Presently she appeared to be more pacified; and they waited at the side of the porch to see you all come out. It’s my opinion, if I may express it, that the bride, Miss Fane Capell as was, seen them when she was getting in the carriage; and that it gave her a turn.”

“What makes you think so?”

“Oh, anybody with eyes could see how upset she were, and the awful start she give when she caught sight of them. The man noticed it, and dragged the old lady back. He didn’t seem to want no disturbance. There was things to be done ‘ere and in the church; but I let ‘em slide for once, and follered the man and woman to see what they’d do. I kept ‘em in sight, and they went and took up their stand opposite Mr. Capell’s house; and there they waited. Liza, didn’t you hear me speak to Tommy?”

“Are you quite certain of all this?”

“Of course I am!”—indignantly; “and I’ve thought a good deal about it since. I neglected my work, and upset Bopple, which we shan’t get over in a minute. Should I hev done that for nothin’? Not likely. I ‘ad ‘alf a mind to warn Mr. and Mrs. Fane Capell as suspicious characters was about.”

“Yes, yes; these people waited outside Mr. Capell’s house. What then?”

“It’s quite time we’d done our tea, if you’ll excuse me. There isn’t no service at St. Clement’s this evenin’; but there’s neglected work to do, and the offices to attend to, and time is money to people in our purfession, as in others. You must really excuse me.”

Whinstone took some loose silver from his pocket.

“I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Bopple: I should think the woman you describe was not quite *compos mentis*—right in her head, you know. You will allow me to make your children a small present.” He laid the coins on a corner of the table. “I am sorry to detain you a moment longer; but did you see how long these people waited outside the house?”

Mrs. Bopple glanced at the money:

“They waited until the young lady came out. Very queer it were to see her come out like that, if you awsk me—for all the world as if she had stolen a ‘ammer. I knew her, though other people didn’t appear to.”

“Well, well?” said Whinstone impatiently:

"She didn't see them ; but they follered 'er."

"Mrs. Bopple, are you positive of this ?"

"Lawks, yes ! I'm positive, make what you may of it. I'm not in the 'abit, if you'll excuse me—"

"Which way did they go ?"

"They went towards Piccadilly. That is, she did, and they follered 'er."

"And where then ?"

"I am a female, sir, and couldn't run my legs off. I've known them as had a fit which carried 'em off through runnin', though of a fuller habit than me. Not that she exactly ran ; but she walked very fast. And it's my opinion she see them at the corner of Bolton Street, for she made a sort of sudden rush, and I lost sight of 'er."

"And the man and woman ?"

"They went after 'er, and I didn't see them no more, not bein' able, as I said, to run my legs off through palpitation."

"And you cannot tell me any more ?"

"No, I can't."

"Perhaps—" and he put his hand to his pocket again:

"No, sir. I don't object to the children 'avin' a little present. Why should I ? There ain't no disgrace in that, as I am aware on, nor in getting the value of your words," said Mrs. Bopple. "But I'll not deceive you. If you was to make me Queen of England, I couldn't tell you no more, except that I've seen Miss Fane Capell many a time in St. Clement's, and couldn't make no mistake about 'er."

Whinstone again questioned the verger and his wife concerning the personal appearance of the mysterious man and woman ; but, finding he could gain no further information, took his leave, more troubled and perplexed than ever. He endeavoured to hide his real concern from Mr. and Mrs. Bopple, but, it is to be feared, with little success.

What could be the meaning of it all ? was the ever recurring question: How could he meet his friend, and tell him what he had heard ?

He would not have paid very much attention to what Mrs. Bopple had said—ladies of her class often have a vivid imagination of a certain kind, but are lacking in a due sense of proportion—except for the other circumstances—the fact that Adeliza had undoubtedly been greatly agitated in church, that she had undoubtedly disappeared, no one knew where ; and that the page boy had also averred that a foreign-

looking man had watched Mr. Capell's house, and had followed the young lady when she left it.

But what possible connection could there be between his friend's bride—young, beautiful, rich, accomplished, tenderly-nurtured—and these somewhat disreputable-looking foreigners ?

Surely, they could possess no power over her sufficient to make her leave her new-made husband, whom she had apparently so willingly married, and for whom she had seemed to have so deep an affection—to leave him, and the happy, brilliant future before her, her home and friends—to fly from everything like a culprit or a madwoman: Was she mad ?

Stay ! she had been at a school in Paris, he had heard. Would this fact furnish any clue to the mystery ? Could it be that in France she had made the acquaintance of these people, and that they had obtained some great power, real or fancied, over her ? He had heard of such things, of course ; but they were more frequent in romance than in real life.

Strange suspicions came to him—suspicions he would have been afraid to impart to another person. The mystery must be solved for Wilgorton's sake ; and, it might be, for her sake. It might be necessary to save her from herself. But how set about the solution ?

A young lady of position, like Adeliza, could not all at once disappear in London, and leave no trace. There were agencies for the discovery of missing persons. If they heard nothing of her soon—but surely they would hear—these agencies must be employed. But this could only be done with the consent of Wilgorton and Mr. Capell, and when other means had failed:

Whinstone's sympathies were fully aroused. He and Wilgorton had known each other from boyhood. They had been at school and college together, and a strong affection existed between them: At one time they had been almost inseparable—the first interruption to their close intercourse being Wilgorton's engagement to Miss Fane Capell. He had been a little jealous of Miss Capell's influence over his friend at one time ; but seeing how Kenneth's happiness was wrapped up in her, being a manly fellow, and reasoning with himself that such changes must come, he loyally accepted the situation:

Afterwards his own love romance had come ; and this deepened his sympathy

with his friend. He was now most sincerely anxious to remove his present trouble, to bring the two together again, and, if possible, to prevent scandal. But again, how was this to be done?

Plunged in thought, Whinstone walked on, scarcely heeding whither he went.

Presently his attention was attracted by a small crowd of people, who were gathered round an elderly lady, short, slight, and dressed in black, who was talking volubly, and gesticulating somewhat frantically to the evident amusement and wonder of the crowd.

The moment he saw the lady a resemblance between her and the description he had received of the elderly person in the church struck him. He joined the crowd and inquired in French whether he could do anything for the lady. She looked up quickly and, replying in the same language, asked to be directed to one of the streets at the back of Oxford Street.

It appeared that the lady, although unmistakably French, spoke English fairly well, but had some difficulty in the pronunciation of proper names, and hence had been unable to make the persons from whom she had been inquiring her way understand her meaning.

Whinstone himself did not know the street she wanted; but he consulted a policeman who just then appeared upon the scene, and, having received directions, offered to escort the lady thither.

She glanced at him from head to foot in a quick, restless manner, and rather abruptly declined his offer. Then, having perhaps obtained the information she sought from the way the policeman pointed, or having overheard his words, she darted suddenly across the crowded thoroughfare, and disappeared.

Whinstone had, however, also obtained some information, and he determined to follow it up. He crossed the road, and made his way to the street for which the woman had inquired. He had no wish to be seen following her, and, therefore, proceeded much more leisurely than she; but quite expected to see her in front of him. She was, however, nowhere to be seen.

The time was early in March. The day was now closing in, and the shop-windows and street lamps were lighted. The street he sought was a long, gloomy thoroughfare, with tall, sombre-looking houses, all very much alike, and most of them let off in

separate apartments, judging by the number of bells at the side of the street doors; indeed, a typical London street of its class. There were comparatively few foot-passengers in the street; but the woman was not visible.

How discover the house she had entered, if, indeed, she had entered one at all? It was impossible to go from dwelling to dwelling and inquire for a person whose name he did not know. At any rate, it would be an awkward thing to do. And if he found the house and the woman, what excuse could he make for intruding upon the latter? She might, after all, have nothing to do with the missing bride. He put this thought from him, however. His first object was to find the woman.

He walked slowly up one side of the street and down the other, carefully scanning the opposite houses. His perseverance was rewarded. A lamp had evidently just been lighted in one of the upper rooms, and a woman came to the window to draw down the blind. He chanced to be looking that way. The light was not good, and she had her back to it; but he believed he recognised the person he sought.

Without a moment's hesitation, he crossed the street, and rang one of the bells of the house. He had to repeat the summons more than once before it was answered. At length a slatternly maid-servant came to the door.

"There ain't nobody in the third pair back, so you needn't ring the house down," she said.

"I am sorry to trouble you," he said. "I am afraid I rang the wrong bell. I want Madame——" He hesitated, as though he had forgotten the name.

"If it be them new folks, the foreigners, as hev come, Mounseer and Madame Lenoir, it's the second floor; and that's the bell"—indicating one he had not rung.

"Lenoir? Yes, thank you; I will go up. There is no need to trouble you. Second floor, did you say?"

"Yes; first door on the landing."

A sudden resolution had come upon him to see these people unannounced. The servant was evidently glad to be relieved from the necessity of preceding him.

The staircase was very dark, but, grasping the balustrade, he mounted the steps, turned a corner, saw a light shining under the bottom of a door, and heard someone moving about.

He hesitated a moment; then stepped forward, and knocked at the door.

(Next month the extraordinary mystery deepens still further.)

MORE HINTS.

BY THE EDITOR.

Last month I had something to say about How NOT to Write Stories, and begged my contributors to be more simple and less high-flown, and not to use similes unless these were apt ones. This month I want to continue my lecture! Where so many of the stories submitted to me fail, is in the matter of plot. Really good plots are few and far between.

The short story of, say, 3000 words should be built on one central idea—if possible, a new one—and the writer should work up to the climax without waste of words. Do not lead up to it with a lot of unnecessary dialogue or elaborate description of scenery. Read the papers and get hold of something original—some incident in real life—and then weave an ingenious story round it. If you cannot invent a plot you can always find one in the life going on around you.

Don't let your readers down—beware of the anti-climax. In the story of a naval encounter submitted to me the other day, there were half-a-dozen incidents of an alarming character introduced which turned out, after all, not to bear in the least upon the plot. This kind of thing disappoints a reader, and is a sample of bad construction. Select only such incidents as help on the plot. Don't give away the dénouement in the body of the story; the happy ending may be obvious enough, but mind you keep the reader ignorant as long as possible of the way it is to be brought about.

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In the Long Complete Story (10,000 to 16,000 words) a good plot is the first essential, and there must be a sufficient number of incidents, interesting in themselves and well-handled, to carry on the plot. Stories of this class must, above all, have a powerful human interest and awaken feelings of sympathy with their characters. But don't have too many characters. You haven't time to do justice to more than three or four, and if you introduce all the uncles and cousins and brothers and sisters-in-law of the hero and the villain, you will find your space gone before you can start developing the plot. Your readers will be mystified, and will be turning back all the time to find out who's who. Finally they will throw down the story in disgust. No; what you want is few characters, well drawn, and a strong thread of interest, one end in the first paragraph and the other in the last.

x x x x x

I lately came across the following practical little alphabet of short story writing, which gives many useful hints:

**Acquire
Brevity
Condense
Details
Eliminate
Faultiness
Grip
Heartstrings**

**Intercept
Jerkiness
Know
Life
Mimic
Nobody
Originate
Plots**

**Study
Treatises
Understand
Versatility
Write
X-pliactly
Your motto
Zealousness.**

x x x x x

I want to draw your attention to a story called "The Conventional Ending," on page 179 of this number. I offer a prize of £1 1s. for what I consider to be the best ending to the story. It does not follow that the prize ending shall be similar to that which the author himself has written, and which is at present locked away in my desk, but I shall give the prize to the ending that in my opinion gives the most satisfactory termination to the events of the story.

Uncle Horrobin's Visit.

By F. SACKVILLE MARTIN.

How his nephew was extricated from a very awkward predicament.

"GREAT Jupiter!"

Jack Tremlin stared at the letter which lay before him on the breakfast-table. It seemed a very ordinary letter, and there was nothing in its superficial appearance to call for the exclamation with which he had greeted it. The paper looked cheap, the handwriting a little unformed; a man's handwriting, too, so that at least one set of annoyances could be dismissed. Nevertheless, the young man sat regarding it with an expression very similar to that which he would have assumed had a snake risen from underneath the table.

He took it up gingerly and proceeded to read it over again in an undertone, punctuated with pauses:—

"DEAR JACK," it ran, "I am coming up to London to-morrow with a deputation of the Haughton Town Council over some business of getting power to borrow money from the Local Government Board for the improvement of our water supply. I shall not have much time to spare as I shall be at the House of Commons a good deal, and I don't want to spend more than two days in town at my time of life. A man of my age looks to the comforts of his own home and his own beds. They don't air sheets properly everywhere.

"Still, I want to look in on you and Maisie. You have told me such a lot about her that I feel quite anxious to see her. I suppose by this time you believe what I told you about the advantages of married life—especially for the young. I shall spend the best part of a day with you, and you might give me dinner and tea.—Your affectionate uncle, "WILLIAM HORROBIN."

Jack Tremlin was a young man who combined with the exercise of his profession as a barrister an uncertain amount of literary work. Between the two, he managed to eke out half enough for a living. The other half was more than supplied by the generosity of his maternal uncle, Mr. William Horrobin—Councillor William Horrobin, J.P., as he would have preferred to be called.

Mr. Horrobin was Jack's sole remaining

relative, and he took a marked interest in the young man's career. He himself had married early, and though he had not been blessed with a family, he had never ceased urging upon his nephew that it was his duty to marry. It kept young men straight, he said. It lessened their temptations, and set them early upon the only true path in life—the path of steady acquisition of money. His importunity was such that the young man had often writhed under it.

At length, advice began to be accompanied by hints that if his nephew did not see his way to oblige him in the matter, his allowance was likely to be reduced, since it was obvious that a single man did not require an amount more than sufficient to keep two. Jack acted promptly, and his uncle was gratified to learn that he had entered into the bonds of matrimony with a Miss Maisie Corbin.

After that occurrence, Jack's letters reeked of domesticity. "Maisie sends her love." "Maisie is quite looking forward to the time when she will be able to meet her uncle." "Maisie and I join in affectionate remembrances," and so on.

All of which was very satisfactory. And it was more difficult to imagine what there could be in the letter to cause Jack's perturbation. But one unpleasant fact might as well be mentioned first as last. *There was no Maisie!*

The irritation of continual good advice, coupled with a lively imagination and a taste for fiction, had led to her arrival. Haughton had seemed a very long way off. It was hidden in the wilds of Lancashire, in the midst of many main lines that ran within three miles of it, but with only a loop line station of its own—a desperate place to get into or out of. Uncle William had never troubled his nephew with a visit, and Jack had not been in Haughton for many years.

The scheme had worked admirably for

twelve months, and Jack had been upon the verge of contemplating another interesting announcement and wondering whether he could do it with safety, when his uncle's letter had put an end to his little inventions, and had left him face to face with stern realities.

"What on earth am I to do?" repeated Jack to himself. "Hang it, there must be some way out of it! I shall tell him that Maisie has gone to see an aunt. No, that won't do. I told him that her sole remaining aunt had died in my last letter. And if I tell him she is staying with friends, I'm pretty sure to pitch on a spot where he knows people. And then he'll be going there on some deputation to look at setts or water mains or drainage. How about Chapel-en-le-Frith? Where the dickens is that, now? It sounds the sort of place that wouldn't have anything worth seeing in the municipal line. By George!"—as he remembered the announcement he had been contemplating—"it's lucky *that* letter didn't go!"

Whilst he pondered, a light knock came at the door and a young woman entered. She was fair, with blue eyes and little smiling dimples that played about the corners of her mouth. She wore a sailor hat, and a fawn-coloured jacket and skirt, with a slate-grey blouse. She started slightly as she noticed the breakfast-table.

"I beg your pardon," she said; "surely I am not too early?"

"No, no, Miss Joyce," he replied. "It is I who am a little late. I did not get in until two this morning, and I overslept myself in consequence."

"Shall I come in again?" she asked.

"Oh, no. Just wait a bit. I will ring for the landlady to get the table cleared, and then we can get on with the novel."

She seated herself in the arm-chair near the fire. Jack rose and rang the bell. The landlady, a thin, sharp-featured woman, appeared and busied herself in removing the breakfast things. When she had finished, she gave a parting glance of suspicious dislike at the girl, and vanished.

Miss Joyce rose at once and went to a side-table, removing the cover from a typewriter. She set the carrier, dusted the keys with a little flick of her handkerchief, and then looked up, smiling.

"Will you dictate," she asked, "or have you anything for me to copy?"

"I'll dictate," said Jack. "I don't know that I feel much like it this morning, though."

"Perhaps you will feel better as you go on," she replied; and sat expectantly, her fingers poised above the keys.

Jack ran his fingers through his hair:

"Maisie!" he began.

"Eh? I beg your pardon!" she said, looking up in startled astonishment:

"I said 'Maisie,'" said Jack. "Didn't you hear me?"

She flushed:

"Really, Mr. Tremlin," she said, "I do not know that our business relations give you any right to address me by my Christian name."

"The dickens!" he said. "Is your name Maisie?"

"I can't imagine how you knew it!" she answered.

"I didn't," he replied. "I wasn't talking about you. Maisie is the name of the girl in the book."

"Oh, are you going to alter it?" she answered. "You know that yesterday it was Enid."

"Was it? Oh, so it was! I was thinking about something else. Let me see—where were we?"

"We had just come to the part where Enid has found out her father's deception."

"Oh, ah, yes! Very well; here goes!"

He started to dictate in a loud voice.

"In the recesses of her nature, Maisie—I mean Enid—had an inborn scorn and detestation of a lie. Even the appearance of falsehood was odious to her."

The girl's fingers flew swiftly over the keys. "Yes?" she asked, looking up.

Jack was regarding her gloomily:

"Yes?" she said again.

"I was thinking," replied Jack:

"About Enid?"

"Yes. Silly little fool, wasn't she?"

"Oh, I don't think so," said Maisie delicately. "I think she's just perfectly sweet. What do you think is wrong with her?"

"Nothing. I didn't mean it, really. She's a nice enough girl as girls go. I've been a bit worried this morning. I have had a letter that has bothered me."

"Perhaps you would like to stop?"

"No, no. I shall be all right in a minute. Wait a bit and let me think."

She paused and sat waiting. Jack regarded her covertly, taking in her pretty, upright figure, the little curl of hair about her ears, and her trim costume. It was the latter upon which his attention eventually fixed itself. The skirt and jacket were

neatly cut, but they were not new; they had seen service. A sudden idea occurred to him, and its brilliancy carried him away from all considerations of prudence.

"I say, Miss Joyce," he said abruptly, "how are you off for money, eh?"

She swung round slowly on the revolving-chair, looking at him with widely-opened eyes.

"I mean," he went on, "are you hard up? I shouldn't think this business was a very paying one. Are you in want of cash?"

She turned back to face the keys, looking down at them studiously. Jack would have given a good deal for a glimpse of her face, but all he could see was the curve of her cheek and throat. For quite two minutes she paused, and when she spoke again her voice was not quite under command.

"That is not a very generous question," she said. "I have my living to make and my mother and two sisters to help. I don't find it too easy. I don't think your question was a very kind one."

"Oh, bother!" said Jack penitently. "I didn't mean to offend you. And I didn't ask without a reason: What I wanted to know was whether you had any use for a five-pound note?"

She rose and faced him.

"Really, Mr Tremlin," she said, "I cannot permit this. Please, please, don't say any more. Let us get on with the novel. I should not like to have to give up the work. It does mean something to me, you know."

"Give up the work!" cried the astonished Jack. "Why on earth should you give up the work? And what have I said to offend you? It isn't every girl who would turn up her nose at the chance of earning a fiver. If you want it I can put you in the way of it. If you don't, there's no more to be said."

Her face crimsoned with vexation at her own mistake.

"I am so sorry," she said; "I did not understand you. Of course I should be glad of the chance of earning such a sum: Will you tell me how I can do it?"

"It's a bit out of the way," replied Jack tentatively. "But you wouldn't have much to do. You'd only have to pass as my wife."

"To pass as your wife!"

"Yes. It's like this," went on Jack quickly. "I have just had a letter from

my uncle in Lancashire. He's as rich as they make 'em down there, and that's saying a good deal. He has kept me in funds and has been no end of a good chap to me. But he has a fad about young people getting married early. He kept worrying me so to get married that at last I told him I was married; told him I'd married a girl called Maisie. Now the old chap's coming up to town for a couple of days, and he means to put in one of them with me. He says he wants to see the wife. Well, you see, I have to get a wife to show him. So I thought if you wouldn't mind—just for the day, you know, it would please the old boy no end, and it wouldn't do any harm to anyone."

Miss Joyce, as she listened to this extraordinary confession, uttered as it was in a rueful and lugubrious tone, found herself torn between the desire to laugh and a just reproach of so horrid a plot. Her sense of humour triumphed, and she burst into a little silvery peal of laughter.

"Oh, Mr. Tremlin!" she cried. "How could you do such a thing!"

"One never knows what one can do until one tries," replied Jack lugubriously. "But you will help me, won't you?"

"I couldn't think of it!" she cried. "One never knows what might turn up. He might want to see me again."

"He might," replied Jack; "but he won't. I'll settle all that. Once he has gone back to Lancashire I can do anything with you. I can kill you if I want to. And I will, too! I've had enough of married life. I'll give him a decent interval and then send him a letter on deep mourning paper announcing your demise. You'll see that that will make it all right."

"You wicked man!" cried Miss Joyce, aghast at his ingenuity.

"You *will* help me, *won't* you?" he asked anxiously.

She cast her eyes down and when she raised them again her face was radiant with a fine blush.

"Five pounds means a great deal to me," she said; "a great deal more than you might think, Mr. Tremlin. You—you won't think any the worse of me if I do this?"

"Think any worse of you!" cried Jack. "Why, you're an angel! You will have pulled me out of the biggest hole I have ever been in. And I won't forget it. Say you will."

She hesitated a moment more, but the

anxiety in his face was ludicrous, and she surrendered.

"You don't deserve any help after such stories," she said; "but I—I will if you really want me to."

"Want you to!" cried Jack. "I'm saved! saved! That's what I am."

A moment's embarrassment succeeded. All at once they seemed somehow changed in each other's eyes. So wonderful a thing is the very name of matrimony. Then Jack, conscious of the awkwardness of the silence, plunged into it with a splash of speech.

"Ever done any amateur theatricals?" he asked.

"No."

"That's a pity," he said, "for we shall have to get up a bit of a performance. You will have to call me 'Jack,' you know."

"I know."

"Well, don't you think you had better try it now?" he went on—"just by way of rehearsal, and to get used to it?"

"Jack!" she said.

A beautiful rose pink spread itself upon her cheeks.

"Very pretty," remarked Jack approvingly, and at the same time a trifle ambiguously. "I say, though, I'm not sure that that colour of yours is all right. We have been married a year, you know."

"Have we?" she answered. "Then I must try not to blush—Jack," she added shyly.

"That's better!" said Jack promptly. "Much better. It won't be so unpleasant after you have had a little practice."

"I suppose," she ventured, "that you will want to call me—to call me by my Christian name?"

"Yes," he answered slowly. "Ahem—Maisie."

A wonderful, ruby-tinted beetroot colour flooded his face.

Maisie burst out laughing.

"And you talked of my blushes!" she cried. "What about yours?"

"By Jove!" said Jack, turning about to study himself in the glass. "This will never do at all."

"Perhaps, when you have had a little practice," she suggested, with a delicate suggestion of retort in her tone.

"Maisie!" said Jack. "Maisie, Maisie, Maisie, Maisie, Maisie!"

They both laughed, and the sense of the jest shared in common dissipated the last strands of their embarrassment:

"It's all a matter of practice," he remarked. "By to-morrow we shan't notice it. Uncle William will come and go and in about a month's time I can kill you comfortably."

"I'm very young to die," she remarked pityingly.

"Oh, I'll fix up something for you; typhoid, or heart failure, or St. Vitus' dance," he replied. "Or epilepsy! How would you fancy epilepsy?"

"I would not fancy it at all," she said. "I like heart failure ever so much better."

"Then make it heart failure," he answered; "anything to oblige."

They looked at each other, and laughed again.

"I say, you know," said Jack, nodding sagely, "there's another thing. Married people are supposed to kiss each other."

"Are they?" she said, getting pink again. "Surely not when they have been married a year!"

"They are!" said Jack decisively. "It's always done if only for the sake of appearances. Don't you think that we had better practise that?"

"No," she replied firmly, "I think we may dispense with that. Kissing is foolish."

"I always was a fool," remarked Jack casually, "but have it your own way. I don't suppose the old chap will notice it. And if he does, we can say that you are the president of an anti-kissing league. It's said to be very infectious, you know. The germs, I mean, not the kissing. Now you know what you have to do. Come here to-morrow and call me 'Jack,' and look as if you were at home. That's all. You will have to spend the day here, and as soon as the old chap has gone back to his hotel, you can clear off. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Good! And now, Uncle William, come on! 'Come one, come all, this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I.' That's a quotation from Scott, Maisie."

"I knew it, Jack," she said merrily.

The rest of the morning they spent in elaborating their nefarious plan.

* * * * *

Councillor William Horrobin, J.P., was a large man with a loud voice. He dressed with a fine freedom from the trammels of Metropolitan convention. His bowler hat, a size too small for him, sat rakishly upon his iron grey hair. His beard was stubbly and bristling. He entered the

apartments of the young man with the air of a good-natured whirlwind and wrung Jack's hand until the young man's arm fairly ached:

"So glad to see you, uncle!" said Jack: "This is Maisie—my wife."

Mr. Horrobin turned upon the blushing maiden, took her to his arms and planted an avuncular kiss firmly in the middle of her lips:

"Oh!" cried Maisie, taken entirely by surprise and evincing no little distress: "Oh, dear!"

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Horrobin genially: "Weren't you going to give your old uncle a kiss?"

"I ought to have told you," interposed Jack hastily, "that Maisie doesn't believe in kissing. She is president of an anti-kissing league: You see, the doctors say it isn't a very nice practice."

Mr. Horrobin stared: Anti-kissing leagues had not penetrated the more remote parts of Lancashire:

"They may say what they like," he said, with a laugh, "but they all do it. If I were you, Jack, I should put a stop to all that nonsense: Why, I should like to have seen your aunt's face if I had taken up with such notions when I was your age: No, no; kissing is kissing!"

Maisie was too much perturbed to make any attempt to controvert this axiom: Uncle Horrobin seemed satisfied with the weight of his retort: He took up a commanding position with his back to the fire, and thrust his hands under his coat-tails: He looked around him with approval:

"Nice little place you have here," he said, "but I should have thought, Jack, that by this time you would be in a house of your own."

"We prefer this," said Jack calmly: "You see, it saves Maisie all the trouble of housekeeping."

Mr. Horrobin turned upon the girl with an expression of mild disapproval:

"Tut, tut!" he said; "that won't do, my dear: A young married woman should take a pride in making her husband comfortable: That's one of the things a man should marry young for—the comforts of a home: Does she make you comfortable, Jack, eh?"

"Very," said Jack, inwardly wishing that his uncle would follow her supposed example:

"Well, you ought to have a home of your own," insisted Mr. Horrobin in a brassy

voice. "A young woman wants a house: When she has got a house and a couple of children to put in it, she's happy. And if she isn't, she ought to be."

He laughed genially. It was fortunate for Maisie that she possessed a sense of humour: The interview promised to be a trying one. It was a little difficult to gauge the lengths to which Uncle Horrobin's conversation might carry him:

Jack came to the rescue:

"We—er—we haven't any family," he said awkwardly:

Insensibly Mr. Horrobin's face grew graver.

"I know," he said; "that's a pity. Your aunt and I have never had any, as you know. It has always been hard for us. We have both felt it hard. Plenty of money and no children to spend it on. Look at me, now—a man of wealth! But an empty house at home: No youngsters to climb up and down the bannisters or to make mud pies on the garden walks. That's why I'm so fond of you, Jack, my lad: You see, you're like one of my own: Your mother was my favourite sister. And, you see, I've none at home."

Maisie looked up quickly: For the first time she actually found herself liking Uncle Horrobin: And with the feeling a little flush of shame beset her at the part that she was playing. It had seemed a joke; but some of the salt had gone out of it.

"But there's plenty of time—plenty of time," said Mr. Horrobin, with a return to his former manner and his brassy laugh: "You haven't been married as long as all that. And when I come again I expect to find you surrounded by a whole family: You'll find the old man has plenty of pennies to go round: I like to feel little hands in my pockets."

"Yes, that's all right!" said Jack hurriedly, anxious to change the subject of conversation: "But suppose Maisie were to die?"

"Suppose what!" said his uncle, looking first at him and then at the girl with an expression of undisguised amazement: "What in the name of goodness is going to make her die? She doesn't look like dying."

"Oh, well you never know," said Jack desperately: "There are so many things going about: There's typhoid, for instance, or heart failure, or epilepsy, or St. Vitus' dance: They are very catching, you know."

"Catching!" ejaculated Mr. Horrobin

feebly. "I hope insanity isn't catching. What's the matter with the man, my dear? You look a fine, healthy young woman: You haven't any epilepsy in the family, have you?"

"No, thank you," said Maisie, suppressing her desire to laugh. "I'm quite well, thank you."

"I thought so!" said Mr. Horrobin triumphantly. He pulled out a heavy silver watch-chain and extracted a time-piece of generous proportions. "I must be getting along," he remarked cheerfully. "I have to be at the House. The deputation are there and I ought to have been with them by now. But I wanted to see you as soon as I could: I'll be back here to dinner: You'll give the old man a bite, won't you?"

"Of course!" said Jack. "We shall be very glad to see you."

"That's right!" said Mr. Horrobin heartily. "I'll get along now, and take a 'bus."

"Wouldn't a hansom be quicker?" suggested Maisie mildly.

"A hansom! No, no, not for me! Take care of the pence and the pounds will look after themselves. You and Jack will find that out after I'm gone. And I want to leave my money to people who will take care of it. Good-bye! Good-bye! I'll be back to dinner."

They heard the hall door slam behind him. Maisie sprang to her feet.

"I say!" said Jack, looking at her, "I'm beastly sorry."

"Sorry! What about?" she asked, bewildered.

"About his kissing you: I'd have stopped him if I could, but I couldn't think of anything. But don't let it worry you. I'll see that he doesn't do it again: What do you think of the old boy?"

"I like him! Oh, I like him!" she cried. "Jack, it's a shame! When he was talking about—about the little hands in his pockets, I did feel so mean. Wouldn't it be better to tell him everything?"

"Better! I say, Maisie!"

"Oh, don't call me that again!" she cried.

"I must! Besides, you called me Jack, just now."

"I didn't mean to."

"But you've got to. As for owning up, it wouldn't do. I could never face the old chap again."

"I don't see how you can face him now,"

she answered reproachfully. "I think I ought to go home."

"Home!" cried Jack. "No, by George! you shan't do that. Just think a minute, Maisie. It's only for the day. We can send him back to Lancashire as happy as a king. Why, if he knew I wasn't married at all, I believe it would break the old chap's heart."

"Yes," she said irresolutely. "Yes, he wouldn't like it. I wouldn't like to hurt him."

"Then you'll play it out?" he asked anxiously.

"I suppose I must."

When Mr. Horrobin returned he was loud in his denunciations of the dilatory methods of the Committees of the House of Commons. He settled down to his dinner, however, in a high state of good humour. He drank a good deal of beer, he talked a good deal, and laughed a good deal more.

"At any rate, Jack," he said, "I've got a piece of good news for you. I shouldn't have thought it good news yesterday, but I do now. I shan't be able to get home for a week. I shall have to stay in town until the business is settled."

A blank despair fell upon the young couple as they gazed at each other across the table with a furtive horror in their eyes. Mr. Horrobin was too much occupied in crushing his peas with the flat of his knife to notice the gratifying manner in which his news was being received.

"Now, if I had to put in all my time kicking about the smoking-room of a hotel," he said, "I should have been grumbling above a bit. But, you see, it's different when I have my nephew and his wife to come and see. It's like being at home. You won't refuse to see a good deal of your old uncle, will you, Jack? You see the old man is getting a bit old for theatres and that sort of thing. What he wants is a bit of gradely domestic life, as we say in Lancashire."

"I'm sure I'm—I'm delighted, uncle!" said Jack, with all the courage he could muster.

"And you, my dear?" asked Uncle Horrobin, turning to Maisie.

"Oh, of course! I'm delighted, too," she replied dismally.

But she spoke no more during the course of the meal. She kept her eyes low upon her plate, and her thoughts were not good to her. Jack also was silent; and had it not been for Mr. Horrobin's conversational

powers and the hearty laughter with which he garnished his own little jests, detection would have been inevitable.

At length the meal was finished, and Uncle Horrobin departed once more, saying that he was due at the House.

Maisie stared at Jack with an expression that Lady Macbeth might have worn had she been condemned to be burnt alive:

"Oh!" she cried. "This is dreadful! I never thought of this. What are we to do?"

"The way of the transgressor is hard," replied Jack, "but undeniably exciting. Hang it, we can't be beaten by a little thing like this. Let him come here. You'll have to play the part every day until he goes, that's all. When he gets back to his hotel at nights, I'll see you home. It can't be long."

"I don't like to," she said miserably:

"It is not a question of your likes and dislikes," said Jack promptly. "You got me into this mess. You must get me out of it."

"I got you into this mess!" she cried indignantly.

"Yes," he said audaciously; "if it hadn't been for you I should never have thought of it. You'll have extra work, so you'll get extra pay. I shall have to spring another fiver."

"Oh, I couldn't take money for this!" she cried, as though his words had stung her. "I thought I could; but that was before I knew what it was going to be. Now I can't! I know I can't!"

"Well, don't, if you don't want to," said Jack, with a twinkling of comprehension. "But you will go on helping me, won't you?"

"I suppose I must," she said dismally; "but it will be a lesson to me. I will never, never do such a wicked thing again. And I will not be paid for it. Mind that!"

"I'll bear it in mind," said Jack, inwardly resolving to make things level with extra typing. "I shall save a tanner, and that's something. You're a brick, Maisie—that's what you are! I'll never forget what you have done for me."

"Neither shall I," she replied, with a somewhat melancholy smile. "It will be on my conscience for ever."

Uncle Horrobin returned to spend the evening. He sat in an easy-chair before the fire with his nephew on one side of him, and his pseudo niece, engaged in the domestic occupation of darning socks (a bright idea of Jack's), on the other. He told many

stories of life in Lancashire, and they listened with what sympathy they could muster. But their attitude of respectful attention was somewhat severely strained as the hands of the clock moved on towards ten. When the hour struck, it was with genuine relief that they saw Mr. Horrobin rise:

"Time for young people to be in bed," he said genially. "And time the old man was getting back to his hotel. There's never a night at half-past ten that I haven't got everything but my nose under the clothes. Good night, Jack. Good-night, lad. You've both been good to the old man: Good-night, my dear. I'd like a kiss, but I won't insist as I know your views. Only if I were Jack, I should put a stop to them, I can tell you."

He shook hands warmly and bustled out: Five minutes later, Jack escorted Maisie to the nearest station on the underground, parting from her with an earnest intreaty that she should arrive punctually in the morning:

"If the old gentleman were to take it into his head to come to breakfast," he explained; "it would be no use my telling him that my wife had not come home yet. It wouldn't look well."

So for the next week Maisie arrived early and went late. Uncle Horrobin's affection for his pretty niece became stronger every day, and at last when the time came for him to return to Lancashire, he took her hand, and speaking with a mysterious inflection that was evidently intended to establish a confidence between them, he pressed something into it:

"A little present that Jack is to know nothing about," he said. "It's from your own uncle to your pretty self, and he is not to have a penny of it. It will do to buy pretty dresses for a pretty girl. And remember, there is plenty more where that came from, and you have only to write."

"Oh, I couldn't!" she cried. "I couldn't!"

"But you have got to: Jack, you're a lucky beggar to have such a wife: Good-bye. And, Maisie, as I'm leaving to-day, I'm going to have a kiss, views or no views: That's the single point I see about you that wants improving."

He took his kiss and bustled off. Jack stood upon the doorstep waving farewells. When he reached the sitting-room he found Maisie looking at the piece of stiff, crackling paper which she held in her hand.

"What am I to do with this?" she asked, almost tearfully:

"What is it? A fiver?"

"It's—it's fifty pounds!" she cried:

"Fifty pounds! Well, I wouldn't cry about it," he said drily. "It seems to me that you're in luck."

"You know I can't touch it!" she said fiercely. "You take it!"

"Not I," said Jack calmly. "Didn't you hear him say I wasn't to have a penny of it? It's to buy pretty dresses—for a pretty girl," he added.

"That was when he thought I was your wife," she answered with a blush. "I have got this money under false pretences. Take it."

"Not I."

"Then I'm going to burn it!" she said, moving towards the fire.

"I say!" protested Jack: "Hold on! Fifty pounds! You're a nice extravagant wife for a man to have!"

"You must not speak like that any more," she said quickly: "And if you don't want the note destroyed, you must take it."

She held it out and he took it from her:

"I shall keep it in trust for you," he said:

"I shall never claim it," she replied hotly: "It would burn my hand."

There was a slight, embarrassed pause:

"I suppose I may come to-morrow to typewrite as usual?" she asked.

"Why not?" said Jack cheerfully.

"Oh, I don't know. Only I should have thought that you would never have wanted to see me again. I feel so wicked!"

"Strangely enough, you don't appear so to me," said Jack; "but that is possibly owing to the high moral altitude of my own position."

She turned to take up her hat.

"Well, then, I'll come to-morrow, Mr. Tremlin," she said:

Jack spun round to face her.

"I say!" he said; "don't call me that."

"What?"

"'Mr. Tremlin.' Call me 'Jack.'"

Her face flushed.

"Mr. Tremlin——" she began indignantly:

"No, hang it!" said Jack eagerly; "this won't do at all. I don't like to see you going like this. I hadn't thought of what the place would be without you. You see, I've been married a week now, and I like it so much that I want to go on being married. It would set things right with poor old Uncle Horrobin, too. Really, now I come to think of it, it's the only way out of it."

"You are not joking—now?" she whispered, after a pause.

"I never was so serious in my life."

She looked up with a shy smile.

"I thought," she said, "that you were going to kill me? Typhoid, you know, or epilepsy, or St. Vitus' dance?"

"Don't speak of such horrible things!" he said, his face actually growing pale: "Don't dare to say such things again!" He came close to her and put his arm round her: "Don't dare to say anything," he went on, "but 'Yes.'"

"Yes, then," murmured Maisie modestly:

Uncle Horrobin has paid other visits to his nephew and niece since the first one. Jack has a house of his own, and little hands thrust themselves into Mr. Horrobin's pockets. At which he only chuckles; for they are well filled.

"You will spoil those children, uncle dear," cries Maisie, kissing him (for she has got over her objections to that practice):

"They might as well have it now as later: And if you don't like it, serves you right for the trick you played upon me on my first visit."

For Jack and Maisie have confessed—and have been forgiven!

THE RAJAH'S ELEPHANT.

BY REGINALD RIGBY.

*The Rajah of Brandipawnee
Had an elephant, tame as could be;
Till one day he enraged
The poor creature, when caged,
By a very stale bun for his tea.*

*And the elephant took an oath he
For this insult avenged would be;
And the first chance he got
Was when some foreign "pot"
Paid a visit to Brandipawnee;*

*Said the Rajah: "My elephant, see,
Is as gentle as gentle with me;
He will go through his tricks
Like a cat on hot bricks,
For his tread is as light as a flea."*

*And the Rajah lay flat as could be
Down in front of the elephant. He
Put his foot on the chest
Of the Rajah, and pressed—
(So his son rules in Brandipawnee!)*

Robbed of His Race.

* * * * * By SWANGAY LING.

How it was that Pegasus, the greatest horse of all time, lost the Derby.

THE Colonel removed his eyeglass and polished it carefully.

"You are aware perhaps," he said, "that on no fewer than three occasions I have had a horse run second in the Derby? It has been one of my aims, if not my greatest ambition in life, to win the 'Blue Riband' of the Turf.

"What will you say when I tell you that I deliberately threw it away when I held it in my grasp; besmirching my honour in so doing as wantonly as the racing sharp, who runs his horses to suit his pocket—and all for what? A fancy, a dream perhaps, an intangible something that men call love.

"Without hope of reward I purposely let another wrest from me the covered trophy, though in so doing I reaped only hatred and contumely from her I loved—yet have I never regretted it."

"You interest me more deeply than I can hope to express," I said, as the Colonel stopped and knitted his brows as if in thought.

He looked up sharply, and that glance told me as plainly as a thousand expletives how he hated any interruption.

"Pegasus," he continued, "was, I think, the horse of all time. He was a golden chestnut, with a white-starred face, shoulders and quarters that the most critical could only describe as perfect, and a long body which made his sixteen hands three seem a good hand less. And what a galloper! His smooth, easy action gave one the impression that he was never out of a canter. He won all his two-year-old engagements in the style of a real 'good'un,' but we did not dream how good he was until one lovely day, late in October, we tried him with Red River:

"That horse had only been beaten by a neck for the Derby, and, carrying top weight, had just previously defeated a good field in the Cambridgeshire. On old Burkitt's advice they were tried over seven furlongs at level weights.

"If he's as good as I think he is, the three-year-old won't beat him by a length," remarked the old man. I shook my head, though I had the greatest faith in his judgment.

"We put a sprinter in, with a feather-weight, to bring them along, and the upshot was that the Calcutta Colt, as Pegasus was then known, beat Red River by three lengths. I could scarcely believe my eyes as he came away from the other, about a furlong from home, without any perceptible effort—it was too good to be true.

"Burkitt insisted that the trial was correct, however. 'And,' said he, 'it isn't a horse at all, he's got wings stowed away somewhere that get him over the ground like that; no youngster could beat such a nailing good three-year-old otherwise!

"So there and then I named him Pegasus.

"Though nothing leaked out about this trial, his public performances made him a good winter favourite for the Derby, and, after he had won the Two Thousand in a canter by six lengths, he became what is euphemistically termed 'hot.'

"In truth, it was only a matter of health. Nothing short of sickness or accident could prevent the colt from gratifying my ambition and setting the seal to his own fame.

"Thus, through the sunny days of May, I was astir betimes to see Pegasus take his morning gallops under the watchful eye of Burkitt. To note the added muscle, rippling under a velvet coat that shone like burnished metal; to marvel at that raking, effortless stride, which could at any moment leave his pacemakers toiling vainly in the rear; to watch him pull up as sound as a bell, and without a sign of distress:

"Can you wonder that I already pictured myself leading in a popular winner, and the cheers of a mighty concourse seemed to ring in my ears?

"Three days, only three days, and then——" I murmured to myself as I dozed

off in my rooms in Jermyn Street on the Sunday afternoon prior to the great Epsom carnival:

"I was in that pleasant, semi-slumberous condition, in which day-dreams and dream-land proper merge, when there came a distinct tap at the door.

"I listened and speculated: My man having strongly impressed upon the hall-porter that I was not at home, had gone out. My limbs still remained dormant, though my mind had become clear, when there came another tap: I had no intention of moving, in fact, it never occurred to me—not being thoroughly awake—when a voice brought me to my feet and sent the blood surging through my veins. I hadn't heard that voice for seven or eight years, and if anyone had told me it could make my heart beat one throb a minute faster I should have smiled a superior smile.

"'You might let me in,' it pleaded, and as I hesitated so as to become master of myself once more: 'It's not a bit comfortable out here.'

"Then I strode across the room, and flinging the door open wide, bowed very low.

"'This is indeed an honour your ladyship has been pleased to confer upon me!' I exclaimed to the little figure which outcourteyed my profound obeisance.

"'Don't try to be funny, Harry, you never could, so there!' she said, sweeping into the room.

"'Now, come and sit over here: I've got something quite serious to say to you, and—well—well, I haven't any time to spare.'

"I must own that this was not at all the sort of thing I had rehearsed in bygone years, should our paths ever recross; but the stage management was entirely taken out of my hands by this ever-masterful and dominant morsel of humanity.

"'Look here,' she began, as I subsided into a chair, 'I hear you are going to win the Derby?'

"I answered feebly that I hoped, nay, expected to do so:

"'Well—er—what I came to tell you is, you are not to! I don't want you to! Now you won't, will you? Promise—promise—promise!'

"'Come,' said I, 'Pegasus will win on Wednesday if he's good enough; what is more, he is: Joking apart, Gracie, you cannot mean what you say.'

"'I do mean it, Harry,' she went on, her

eyes full of tears. 'I know, of course I know, how you want to win it, but cannot you manage—'

"'Stop!' I cried harshly. She looked up, still tearful and beseeching.

"'You were about to make a suggestion that I do not wish to hear come from your lips,' I proceeded.

"'Is it so dreadful? Such a difficult thing to do anything to please me nowa-days?'

"'I must decline to discuss the subject. Anything else, but this is different.'

"'You always were an obstinate old thing,' she went on, 'but he won't win.'

"'Very well,' said I, 'that settles it.'

"'You don't quite seem to understand, Harry,' she began again nervously, but I cut her short.

"'Yes,' I said, in that hard, merciless sort of voice which seems quite outside ourselves, and which we only use when we have steeled our hearts to say something which must be said, something that will hurt those we love. 'Yes, I understand. His lordship hasn't been content with robbing me of a wife. Now he needs must interfere with my honour. In order that he may win a few paltry thousands he would make me as base a creature as himself; as it appears he has already made the girl he stole from me, who now comes to beg favours in the name of a love that is dead!'

"'How dare you!' she cried, springing to her feet; her eyes blazing, her cheeks scarlet. 'How dare you! Do you think I'd have come here if he had hinted such a thing? My husband is an honourable man. You know that you do him a cruel injustice. I believed you a gentleman, and relied on some feeling of kindness remaining in your breast for one who, not truly loving, did not do you the injustice of marrying you. He it is, I was foolish enough to think, who would have saved her and her children, ay, and an ancient name—because she bears it—from dishonour; but I was mistaken!'

"'Ay,' I said, for I would not show I was moved: 'I befoul my name, deliberately lose this race to keep his lordship in funds—a pretty tale, forsooth!'

"But she was gone, and the door slammed almost before I had ceased speaking.

"She was gone, and I stood gazing at the closed door like a fool; too proud to call her back, as assuredly she would have been to return:

"I knew from the gossip of the club that his lordship had backed his colt Sunbeam

to win a huge fortune, and looked upon Pegasus as the only possible danger. Also rumour hinted that he was in a tight corner—how tight I did not dream until then.

* * * * *

“‘Let the best horse win!’ Yes, they were the words that kept rising unuttered to my lips during the next forty-eight hours. ‘Let the best horse win,’ and yet there came a clutching at my heart-strings as I pictured her, heartbroken, in the desolation of a noble house, her children, the heirs of an ancient name, little better than beggars.

“Yes, I could forego my own ambition: This paramount prize would be as the apples of Sodom in my grasp; yet, how could I betray the thousands to whom my name stood for all that was honourable and straightforward in the world of sport—how, indeed? No, a thousand times no! And yet an appealing face, which would not be banished from my thoughts, kept coming back again, and I vowed that far more would be well lost in serving her.

“Thus, torn hither and thither by conflicting emotions, as honour and ambition strove in vain to overcome a love I had fancied dead, the hours slipped swiftly by, leaving me in a pitiful state of indecision—was man ever so perplexed?

“It was about three o’clock on the Tuesday that things came to a climax. A wire from Burkitt, announcing the safe arrival of the horse at Epsom, seemed in a moment to crystallise my intentions. All doubt and hesitancy were dissolved, and, imbued with but one idea, I hastily proceeded to formulate my plans.

“The fondest hope of a sportsman, the integrity that we all prize more dearly than life itself, were as nothing when compared with the happiness of her whom I still loved.

“One thing, one thing alone daunted me at all, the fear of being found out. Had she known, had anyone dreamt, I could not have done it.

“To stand before the world disgraced, dishonoured; no, that were more than I could bear.

“You’ve seen the Derby? Try to reconstruct the scene. Close your eyes for an instant, and imagine yourself upon the historic Downs. Take up a coign of vantage on the stands as the course is being cleared for the struggle. Glance up the broad stretch of green turf which bends away over the hill to the right at Tattenham

Corner, dividing the great multitudes on either side.

“Focus your glasses upon the black mass that throngs the hill opposite amid a medley of booths, stalls, tents, banners, and conveyances of every description, from the coster’s barrow, with ‘Neddy’ all wondrously arrayed tied beside it, to the lordly coach on which a merry party discuss an appetising luncheon.

“What a profusion of side-shows and catch-pennies! Acrobats, minstrels, jugglers, three-card-trick sharpers, each hold their levée; most amusing of all, perhaps, the loquacious tipster who enthalls a crowd of credulous holiday folk by the recital of his amazing knowledge, and priceless information—obtained direct from the stable—prior to selling his tips. There, opposite, the great crowd seethes and jostles—the most amazing collection of humanity.

“Turn again to the stands bedecked with fashion’s favourites. The betting rings, a confused mass of jostling men, from whom arises an uproar indescribable, as the raucous-voiced bookmakers shout the odds—a hubbub the like of which can only be heard on a racecourse.

“Wander in the realms of reminiscent fancy just one step further. Imagine that you are the owner of a popular favourite for the great race, run after, sought and congratulated on every side; the cynosure of all eyes; the envy of all hearts, and best of all, perhaps, the idol of that great mass of fellow-creatures who throng the Downs all about, and the countless thousands on the very tiptoe of expectation in almost every corner of the globe, who are waiting to have the name of the favourite ticked off at the end of a wire as the victor—merely a matter of formality before collecting their winnings, so great is the certainty.

“Can you imagine my feelings in such a position, with the certain knowledge that all are doomed to disappointment—the race already lost?

“‘Here they come!’ somebody shouts, and the cry is taken up by hundreds of voices, as tens of thousands of heads are turned in the direction of the paddock.

“With tossing manes, flowing tails, and many prancings, come the fifteen runners, each led by his attendant. A pretty cavalcade indeed!

“Not one but is trained to the hour; proud in the knowledge of his speed and strength, and impatient to get his head and launch himself on the wings of the wind!

Their jockeys, too, those little men with thews and wrists of steel and faces like the Sphinx, arrayed in almost every conceivable hue, lending that gorgeous dash of colour to the scene that completes the picture.

"Then, as the attendants release them, they come cantering back past the stands, some fretfully fighting for their heads and pawing the air, others with smooth, easy stride reserving their efforts with almost human sagacity.

"Among such is Sunbeam, a dark bay with black points, fit to run for a king's ransom, a very picture of a racehorse he flashes by, the violet and orange stripes of his jockey's cap and jacket seeming almost a part, as indeed for the time being they are, of himself.

"I saw all this, as it were, in a dream, on that eventful day, and was brought back to earth by a great shout as the purple jacket and gold cap of the favourite came sailing past.

"Now they are wending their way slowly across the bottom to the starting-post, out in the middle distance opposite the stands.

"It was Burkitt who spoke.

"I don't know what the deuce is up with Pegasus, sir!"

"Eh?" said I, facing round and catching my breath. The old man's face was white and drawn.

"It's my belief he's been got at!" he whispered.

"Rot!" I laughed. "Did you see him canter past? You're over-anxious, man."

"Ay, sir, he seemed all right then," he replied, "but just before he left the paddock he started sweating and trembling all over. It's my belief they've done for him."

"Burkitt!" said I sternly, "don't come here worrying me with a lot of groundless fears," and I turned on my heel.

* * * * *

"They're off!" The fact was proclaimed by one great shout that caught up and drowned all other sounds in its mighty roar, and then suddenly died away into a silence so intense that I could hear my repeater ticking in my waistcoat pocket—or was it my heart thumping?

"They raced up the hill on the far side. Something in white had gone away with a long lead. The favourite, with Sunbeam at his quarters, lay about fourth or fifth, and so they raced behind the booths and

went momentarily out of sight, and over the crest of the hill.

"And at that instant the mighty concourse seemed to draw once more a full, deep breath, which had been caught up at the start, and a confused murmur, interspersed with shrill, staccato cries, arose as each and everyone gave vent to their pent-up excitement in speech.

"Now, they come once again into full view, racing at utmost stretch along the skyline at the top of the Downs. That something in white is still leading, but is coming back to the rest. Black and scarlet, Baron Crofton's colours, are second. Pegasus and Sunbeam, now almost neck and neck, third; while a horse carrying green and pink colours is hanging doggedly at their heels; and among these five, experts lay long odds, is the ultimate winner.

"A long tail of beaten horses stretches along the skyline now passed by the leaders, who are coming at fearful pace down the incline to Tattenham Corner—that deceptive bend into the straight where so many Derbys have been lost and won.

"None of the leaders lose an inch for want of jockeyship. Hugging the rails they literally swing round the bend into the run for home, and come charging down on us like a troop of cavalry.

"Hedged in on either side by a great wall of humanity that sways and ripples like a field of ripe corn in a breeze, they are half-way up the straight before we can again realise their respective positions.

"My heart comes into my mouth. 'Can Pegasus win after all?' I ask myself.

"The white jacket is hopelessly beaten. Sunbeam tackles Baron Crofton's horse. His head is at its girths, its withers, just for a second they race neck and neck, and then the black and scarlet gradually drops back—a game horse fairly and squarely beaten.

"At that instant Pegasus' jockey calls upon him.

"Past the green and pink, which is racing at full pressure at his side; past the beaten horse he shoots, in half-a-dozen mighty strides, and the cry of 'Sunbeam wins' is choked back in a thousand throats as the white-starred face of the beautiful golden chestnut is at his girths:

"On they come; bay and chestnut; orange and purple stripes, purple and gold.

"Neck and neck now, with heads thrust forth to their fullest extent, eyes ablaze, nostrils dilated.

"On they come, every nerve and muscle exerted to breaking point—will neither crack?"

"With bulldog courage, unfaltering, unflinching they dash head and head past the bell; past the crowded stands; scarcely fifty yards to go.

"Pegasus wavers just for the infinitesimal part of a second—some say he stumbled, I know better—and Sunbeam is half-a-length ahead.

"What a horse he is!"

"Undaunted, knowing not the meaning of defeat, he answers once again to his jockey's almost despairing call.

"That fearful turn of speed, that final gallant effort, takes him, in spite of all Sunbeam can do, to the latter's head, and amid a tumult of cries: 'Sunbeam wins!' 'No, no, Pegasus wins!' they flash past the post, and none but the judge knows whether orange and purple, or purple and gold is the victor."

The Colonel stopped:

"What a race!" I ejaculated, for carried away by his vivid description I seemed to see a Derby, won and lost long years since, run over again: The crowds, the babel, the race itself were all imprinted so realistically upon my imagination, as I sat back there in an easy-chair, that it took me some moments to realise that I was indeed in my own study with the Colonel, who sat regarding me with a tinge of annoyance exhibited on his features.

"A thousand pardons!" cried I: "Pray go on!"

"Yes," he continued presently, "there is more to tell. There were a few moments of breathless suspense, followed by a silence, the more pregnant in that a few shouts from lucky speculators interspersed it, as number seven was hoisted in the frame, and the multitude became aware that the favourite had been beaten—defeated by a short head.

"I saw his lordship lead the winner in and heard the 'All right!' shouted, whilst laughingly accepting the condolences of

my friends—glibly allowing, though with a pain in my heart, that the best horse had won.

"Would they have thought so had they seen me a couple of hours previously?"

"Afraid of my own shadow, with trembling fingers, steeled to the act by one overpowering thought—all it meant to her I loved—I had injected ten grains of morphia into Pegasus' veins.

"Think of the effect! The drowsy stupor; the trembling and perspiration; worst of all, the partial paralysis of the all-important respiratory organs. And in spite of everything, under this crushing disadvantage, the superb creature had fought out the issue in a manner that could leave not a breath of suspicion behind.

"Can you wonder that my heart bled for the gallant animal?"

"Presently I made my way to the paddock: I noted Burkitt standing puzzled and disconsolate, watching as a lad led Pegasus hither and thither.

"The horse seemed none the worse, doubtless the tremendous muscular strain he had undergone had in some way acted as an antidote to the noxious drug.

"Turning, I caught sight of Gracie, her face wreathed in smiles, receiving the congratulations of numerous friends.

"She looked up: Our eyes met, and I hastened to add my felicitations.

"She faced me, her head thrown back, and a disdainful smile stole into her animated features. Then, bowing ever so distantly, said: 'You're a splendid loser, Colonel. It's a pity we couldn't both win.'

"Your ladyship is too kind,' I replied, 'such a remark entirely reconciles me to the barren honour of running your splendid colt a good second.'

"She seemed to hesitate just for an instant then, coming quite close, so that none might hear, she hissed:

"Thank Heaven we owe nothing to you!"

"Amen!" I said fervently, and raising my hat in response to her mocking bow, turned away."



Tales of My Clients.

✱ ✱ By A LADY PHOTOGRAPHER.

Edited by GERTIE DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES.

Beatrice Hannel, an officer's daughter, opens an art-photographic studio in Kensington as a means of adding to her slender income. She here tells some of the most fascinating romances in which, through her clients, she has been concerned. Each story is complete in itself.

II.—The Poet of West Hampstead.

"HOW shall this be answered, please, Miss Hannel?" inquired my receptionist, handing me a business letter which had arrived that morning.

"Haven't you replied?" I said, returning query for query.

Miss Thorne's lips grew particularly thin, as they always did when I ventured to question her on the inartistic subject of duty.

"I could scarcely take it upon myself to do so in this case without your instructions. The request contained in the letter is somewhat unusual—I didn't know how to deal with it!" was her respectfully crushing rejoinder.

"Sorry, Miss Thorne—another of my many mistakes!" I answered, taking the letter, and commencing to read its peculiar contents, which ran as follows:—

10 Rumbalt Mansions,
West Hampstead, N.W.

DEAR MADAM,—As I have been assured on every side how specially successful you are in all lines of artistic photography, I cannot think of anyone more fitted to help me in my present requirements. Although I have never troubled to break into verse, I am at heart a poet, and only the mystic, fantastic, unconventional, and unusual appeal to me.

Now, to come to the point, I want my portrait taken in company with one of my own whimsical fancies—as though the fancy were watching over me from the recesses of my own mind, as it were. Probably you will find it difficult to understand what I mean, but if you would kindly call here any morning you may care to appoint, and have your apparatus brought at the same time, I will explain while you operate.

Naturally, I know that for an artist of your repute to consent to take pictures at a bachelor's humble flat is a great concession, but if you could see your way to oblige me I shall be quite prepared to pay any specially high fees you may think desirable to charge.

A reply by return making an appointment will greatly oblige.—Yours truly, J. HAMILTON.

Twice I read over this weird effusion, and then with a third perusal made up my mind that I would "oblige."

For one thing, it was rather appealing for a photographer to be called an "artist of repute"; and, for another, there was quite a pleasing ring about that phrase "*specially high fees*." Besides which two considerations, I really felt very curious to know how a man could be "taken in company with his own whimsical fancies"!

"You might write and appoint the first morning that you know I have free, please, Miss Thorne," I said, handing her back Mr. Hamilton's letter.

"That will be Thursday, then," replied my receptionist.

"Thank you—then Thursday will do very nicely."

But, instead of taking her departure, Miss Thorne still waited.

"Any other letters that require attention, Miss Thorne?" I inquired.

"Oh! no, not any. But—er—"

"Yes?"

"I—er—I suppose you will require me to accompany you on Thursday, will you not? The—er—the gentleman is a bachelor, you see, and in going to his flat, naturally you will need a—er—chaperon!"

"As Harris will take the camera and wait to bring it back, there is no fear of my being without the companion which Mrs. Grundy demands. But if it is that you are as inquisitive as I am about this business, and want to see the photograph taken, come by all means, Miss Thorne," I replied, infusing quite a nasty tone into my voice.

When we reached Mr. Hamilton's flat on Thursday morning we were shown into the drawing-room, while Harris waited in the hall with the camera and other paraphernalia.

It was a well-furnished apartment, but did not in any way suggest the poetic temperament of its owner.

What would be the personality of this gentleman who wished to be photographed "in company with his own whimsical fancies"? I wondered.

Flowing locks, deep, mystic eyes, full of all the romances of the East, a pale, spiritual face, and—

"Ah! good-morning, Miss Hannel. This is awfully good of you to come, don't you know!" And with these words, which broke in upon my picturesque imaginings, I found myself confronted by a fine specimen of English manhood!

His hair was fair, and short as national prejudice demands; his ruddy, healthy face went surety for unimpaired honour and appetite; and his figure held out suggestions of fresh-air games and cold tubs, while his clothes—well, really there was a hint of sporting cheerfulness about the raiment of this individual who professed a taste for the mystic, fantastic, unconventional, and unusual!

"Yes, it really is awfully good of you to come, but—er—I—er—don't think I could get all those—er—poetic notions that come into my head photographed in a proper studio! What?" he blundered on, shuffling his feet about on the carpet.

"Oh! no, I daresay not. And do you wish to be taken in this room?" I replied, anxious to get to work.

"No, no, I haven't fixed it up in here—besides, the light isn't so good. Do you mind stepping into my study?"

Then Miss Thorne and I crossed the cosy hall and passed through a door which Mr. Hamilton was politely holding open.

"Oh!"

I really couldn't help a gasp of astonishment, and for once Miss Thorne was completely bereft of her refined faculty for never seeming surprised.

The study—which evidently in its normal condition would have been a nice, solidly-furnished apartment—presented a most weird appearance.

A long rope was fastened from wall to wall—high up and near the ceiling—from which hung yards and yards of gauze and net draperies, reaching right down to the floor. This paraphernalia was fixed just behind the desk, so that anyone seated in the revolving chair was faced by this extraordinary contrivance.

"It—it looks a bit queer, d-doesn't it?" stuttered Mr. Hamilton. "But, you see," he went on desperately, "we—we poetic chaps have got such jolly odd notions

and nothing'll satisfy us till they're carried out. What?"

"I daresay—yes," I responded weakly.

"And my latest idea is to be photographed sitting at my desk here, deep in thought, with my thoughts photographed, too, as it were."

"But does this gauze represent your thoughts, then, Mr. Hamilton?" I asked, wondering if any symbolical meaning were intended by the transparency of the net!

"Oh! by Jove, Miss Hannel, not quite so bad as that," he answered, with a good-natured guffaw. "No, there's a bit more to come, so if you're ready I'll—I'll—call my friend in"—and with this last extraordinary remark he went to the door and shouted "Polson" in somewhat imperative tones.

A moment's delay, then "Polson" appeared, and as he did so both Miss Thorne and I uttered shrill, feminine squeaks of alarm.

Polson *was* a man, as we discovered when he mumbled about feeling "tied up," but at first he presented the appearance of a ghost dressed up to look like Shakespeare.

His face was whitened, his hair and false pointed beard were floured, and his mediæval get-up seemed to be sprinkled with some fine white powder that gave a general visionary aspect—and particularly so when he stepped behind the thick folds of gauze and pointed one lank forefinger at my client, who was by this time seated at the desk and trying to assume a somewhat rapt expression.

"Will this pose do, d'you think?" he said, addressing me in sheepish tones.

I pulled back the window curtains and put my head on one side.

"Yes, I think I can get the entire picture in if Mr. Shakes—er—if Mr. Polson will step a little closer this way," I replied, dragging the mediæval ghost a few paces forward.

"Rather effective? What?" queried Mr. Hamilton, with a touch of pride.

"Oh! very—yes, very. I conclude you wish to convey the impression that you are drawing inspiration from the works of Shakespeare, do you not?"

"Er—er—yes, that's it, that's it! Good idea. What?"

"Excellent! (No, a little more to the left, Harris. Miss Thorne, would you kindly pass me those plates? Thanks!) Yes, excellent—as you say, quite a 'whimsical fancy'! Raise your head, please—a shade more forward, Shak—er—Mr. Polson—

that's right. Now, steady, please—one—two—three!"

When the picture was duly taken Mr. Hamilton insisted that a few more should be done to insure perfect success, and he was most anxious in his queries concerning the probable result.

"Do you think it will give the impression of a hazy, intangible, half-transparent figure floating about in space, don't you know?" he inquired anxiously.

"I should say so. But, of course, I've never done anything of this kind before, so I can't guarantee the result," I responded, while Harris busied himself with packing up my properties, and Miss Thorne glanced coldly at "Shakespeare," who was now occupied with a decanter and syphon, which he had taken out of the small chiffonier.

"Of course not—of course not; but—er—well, suppose it shouldn't look quite as I want, you could try another way—by sort of mixing two photos up—couldn't you?"

"I don't go in for trick photography at all," I replied with *hauteur*.

"No, no, of course not, I beg pardon—but you *do* think it'll turn out all right, don't you?"—and this queer young man looked into my face with all the ingenuous anxiety of a worried schoolboy. My heart couldn't help softening, so I left off being haughty, said I believed the pictures would be all right, and promised that if they weren't I'd try a few faking experiments!

(How weak we women are directly a big man behaves like a schoolboy, to be sure!)

However, there was no need for any such proceeding on my part, because the photographs turned out a complete success. Mr. Shakespeare—Polson—looked like a pale, misty wraith created out of nothing, and the unversed poet with the lively waistcoat presented a satisfactorily tense and dreamy aspect. Certainly it was a very artistic production! I was quite pleased with the effect, and when Mr. Hamilton sent his usefully plump cheque he filled in three pages with gratitude and enthusiasm.

At first I often recalled this quaint experience, but as time went on, with that rapidity which it has a habit of doing when one is young and there is a lot to be got into life, I began to forget all about the unversed poet of West Hampstead.

Six months later, however, I was destined to once more be brought across his path in the manner which I am now about to relate and bewail.

I was having tea with a woman-friend

who had a cosy little home inside the radius, and who, not caring to be possessed of either a husband, a parrot, or a French poodle, had taken up spiritualism as a spare-time hobby.

"Do stay on and go with me to a private *séance* this evening," she said, as I began to draw on my gloves and look at the clock.

At first I demurred and mumbled out some conscientious remarks about "work waiting to be done," but in the end said that "I should be delighted"—which was true, seeing that occultism in any form always attracts me very much. (*N.B.*—I don't know anything about it!)

"This is a private *séance* just held among friends," explained Marion Kay, as we drove towards the regions directly east of Knightsbridge. "Mrs. Dean (a newly-married woman—pretty little thing!) holds them every Tuesday. She is perfectly crazy on spiritualism, and says that she possesses very strong mediumistic powers. I don't know whether she does or not, I'm sure!"

"And is her husband equally gifted?" I inquired, feeling somewhat sorry for Mr. Dean.

"He has to pretend to be, though I must say he doesn't look specially occult. He's a nice fellow, and had been madly in love with Elsa for years, but she wouldn't have him till at last he discovered that he *was* occult, and also possessed the power of being able to materialise spirits. This fetched Elsa on the spot, so she accepted him and—ah! here we are! Stop cabman—stop—there—the windows with the green blinds!"

When we entered the house a low-voiced parlourmaid showed us into a half-dark apartment where about ten ladies were sitting round in a circle, while the hostess, a daintily pretty girl, who had done her best to spoil her charms by being garbed in a hideous Oriental tea-gown, stood in their midst.

"Ah! you are late—I was just about to call Mishywashymoo! Sit down!" was her somewhat unconventional greeting as she hustled us into two vacant chairs, and continued the proceedings, which lasted over an hour, and were carried on pretty much in the same way as small professional *séances*.

The medium (Mrs. Dean) went through a series of facial contortions which culminated in a certain rigidity of countenance, after which she changed her voice and commenced speaking very rapidly and in gruff tones tinged with a fluctuating foreign accent.

"She is under the control of Racine," whispered a spectacled lady sitting on my right as our hostess seized Marion Kay's hand, pressed it to her brow, and commenced to tell her sundry obvious and unimportant facts about herself.

Then she came to me, clutched me in the same fashion, and made a few startling revelations.

"I can see one room, all glass," she crooned. "There are many brown pictures, and there is one *petit* ball that can be squeezed! There is *aussi* much money, and beautiful dames wiz *décolletée* gowns and hats both at ze same time!—zey sit sere still—*click*! Ah! I zee all zis!"

At first I was somewhat astounded, but then when I remembered that an illustrated interview with myself had appeared in the current number of the *Lady's Whirl*, which was lying on a small table not far from the medium's arm-chair, my astonishment more or less abated!

When the *séance* was ended lights were turned up and the medium became a particularly pretty and vivacious young woman.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, after we had been introduced. "Forgive my not noticing you during the *séance*, but when I am under control of course I am quite unconscious of anything that's going on."

"Oh! of course," I responded. "And is your husband similarly gifted?" I concluded, by way of continuing the conversation.

"Oh! far more so," she replied, her voice dropping into a low tone of reverence. "*My husband can materialise!*"

"That means—er—"

"Cause spirits to appear."

"Indeed! *How* interesting! Have you seen him do this?"

"No, never. He finds it takes it out of him to do it often; but I have a photograph done before we were married, which absolutely proves that he is a materialising medium!"

"How do you mean, Mrs. Dean?"

"I mean that he had the spirit photographed as it appeared to him! I will show you if you are interested"—and, without waiting to hear whether I was or not, she opened a small box and produced a cabinet photograph that had evidently been removed from its mount.

"There, this is the picture! My husband you see, taken in company with the spirit of Shakespeare, and—ah! Ham, here you are! Let me introduce you to Miss Hannel

—the artist Miss Hannel, you know, who's awfully interested in your spirit-photograph!"

And as Mrs. Dean broke off and addressed a tall, breezy-looking Englishman who had just entered the room I looked up from the photograph which I myself had taken and encountered the agonised glance of an "unversed poet," who had once wanted to be taken "in company with one of his own whimsical fancies"!

It was a poignant moment, and I was just thinking that I would positively enjoy giving this impostor away, when I remembered that Marion had told me how he had loved his wife for years, and that she had only consented to accept him when she learnt about his mediumistic qualifications.

Mr. Dean waited in pitiful suspense, and when I replied that I was "immensely interested in spiritualism," and said what "an elevating bond I felt sure it must be between them," he looked like a big, grateful schoolboy who had just escaped a caning:

* * * * *

The next day I received the following communication written in a caligraphy which I had seen *once* before.

DEAR MISS HANNEL,—I can't thank you enough for not giving me away. I'm beastly ashamed of myself, and feel sure you must think me a rank, hypocritical outsider. My only excuse is that Elsa would never have married a blundering idiot like myself—she is so highly strung, artistic, and spiritual, you know—unless I'd seemed something a bit out of the common, and when one day she mentioned how she revered "mediums who could materialise," I took up the game, and put the finishing touch by getting my friend Polson to rig up as Shakespeare.

You know the rest. I'm awfully sorry, but I have tried to make up for this rank piece of deceit by never committing any other, and by running as straight as I can. My wife is sending out invitations for a dinner next week. If you accept I shall feel that you don't altogether condemn me, but if you refuse I shall know that you consider me quite too much of an outsider to be counted among your friends.—Yours with contrition, and very truly,
J. HAMILTON DEAN.

P.S.—I left out the "Dean" when I wrote to you that first time, in case Elsa ever got to hear anything. One can't take too many precautions, can one?

N.B.—Do come on the 18th.

I *did* go on the 18th, and the *soles à la Colbert* were delicious—and so was the host's devotion to the hostess! So much so, in fact, that by the time the evening was over I felt romantically glad that Shakespeare and I had been so useful!

(Next month: "The Ruse of a Flirt.")

The Escape.



By B. E. MACLEOD.

The thrilling story of a rebel's flight in the time of Bonnie Prince Charlie.

THE sun rose slowly: It was the sixth day I had watched its golden rim appear above the distant edge of the moor and disperse the darkness: Reluctantly I left my soft couch of heather: On all fours I crawled the few yards separating me from my hiding-place, and stretched myself full length on the narrow bank above.

Quickly the day broke: The dark shadows faded from the moor, the house on the hillock opposite changed from a blurred mass to a recognisable outline, and even as I looked the rays of the rising sun smote full upon it, and every detail stood clearly out. It was as on the previous five mornings.

The long, low, two-storeyed house, the whitewashed front gleaming in the morning light; the narrow windows, close-barred and shuttered save two, from one of which came the reflection of a fire, while the other sent back the golden sunlight; the peat-reek pouring in a dense cloud from the chimney, the wind blowing its fragrance towards me; and before the door, stiff and starched and red, a red-coat:

As I gazed the door opened, and the soldier sprang to the salute. An officer stepped out and scanned the wide expanse of moor: The sound of his voice as he questioned the man floated on the breeze to me nestling scarce a hundred yards away, and the deeper tones of the man's reply.

Then the guard was changed: The house sprang to life. From the door poured half-a-score of red-coats still but half awake, and all ruffled from their night on the earthen floor in the unaccustomed smoke of the peats.

Three men filed to the right, and turning the end of the house disappeared. Three filed to the left and held towards the rough bridle-path which crossed the moor a quarter of a mile to my right. The officer and three men remained by the house: I watched him set the guard, two men in front and one behind, and then return to the kitchen:

Eagerly I watched the windows, with one

eye on the file nearing the bridle-path. Presently, from the furthestmost window near the thatch the shutter was flung back, and a head emerged. My heart leapt in my breast, and my blood raced again in my veins.

For the space of maybe a minute—though it seemed an hour, and yet was all too short a minute—our eyes seemed to meet across the moss. Then the dear face disappeared, the shutter swung to with a bang, and noting the warning I dropped into my burrow.

A burrow in truth it was. On all sides of me stretched the peat moss, honeycombed with bogholes and treacherous marshes. My refuge could be approached but by a devious way, and then only by one who knew the path, and was accustomed to the treacherous footing of the moss.

I lay in a hollow in the middle of a bank of peat—a circular hollow in the moss, overgrown with thick heather. In our childish days it had been a place of delight and mystery, and by night a place of terror. Our childish hands had scooped with glee a large hole beneath the overhanging bank and trained the heather over it so that the entrance was hid, and none but one who knew its secret would have dreamt that aught lay behind.

Here, on days when anger ruled in our home on the hillock, and later, on nights when the joys of the chase had led us far and brought us home late, the hollow was our refuge and our place of rest. And here now I crouched, a hunted fugitive:

The peat roof was but four feet above the soft peat floor, and the whole in size was scarce bigger than a ship's cabin. It extended backwards about twelve feet, and was but a bare six feet wide. In fine weather it made a dry and springy bed, but now it was soft with the winter's wet, and took many armfuls of heather to make the discomfort seem a little thing:

In faith, sometimes during the long, dreary days when my spirits sank low, and the wet

oozed through and chilled me to the marrow, and the dank smell of the peat moss assailed my nostrils and seemed to weigh me down, I wished I had died with my clansmen on Drumossie's Moor.

At times I would sink into fitful slumber and fight again on that blood-drenched field—charging—charging—charging—against a line which vomited smoke and flame, smiting lusty blows, shouting hoarse orders, waving on my men; then, with a start, I'd wake with the slogan sinking in the death wail, and a bitter pain at my heart that I, too, had not died in the glory of that charge, nor lived to taste defeat.

Then, as the day sank to its close, and kind darkness brooded over the moor, I would creep from my burrow and lie on the top of the peat bank in the fresh, kindly air of the moor, and smoke my old wooden pipe, the while life and manhood crept back to me, and the ills of the dull day faded away.

From the furthestmost window nigh the thatch a light always glimmered, and with its gleam calling to me over the moss my courage mounted ever higher. From the kitchen window poured always the ruddy glow of the fire, and on the breeze were borne the sounds of mirth and rude revelry, but my gaze was fixed ever on the smaller gleam, and my heart took on again courage and hope. For I knew that within that room sat my wife—won during the turbulent days of our brief glory, and loving and loved as only Highlanders can love—a love that grows but stronger with hardship and distress.

What mattered it that I had powerful foes who sought my death and sought to use my wife, all unknowing, as a lure? They knew not the strength of our love, nor the insight into their scheming that love gave, else assuredly they had not thought to deceive her, nor bring me ignorantly to my doom.

When, hard pressed, I had made for my ancient hiding-place, which I had shown my wife but four days before the fateful battle, I knew full well that they would seize the house and await my coming: They did not know that I lay scarce a hundred yards from them and held nightly communication with old Ronald, whom they regarded as but half-witted, and learnt every move they made and every plan they schemed. But so it was, and now, on this morning, I lay eagerly awaiting the signal for action:

The hours passed by on leaden wings:

I strained my ears to every sound. The sun shone brightly from a watery sky right overhead, and still no sign:

I could but ill control my restlessness, and at last, full conscious of the danger, but reckless in my anxiety, I crawled from my refuge and cautiously raised my head above the level of the hollow.

The scene was peaceful. I can see every detail yet in my mind's eye. The smoke poured from one chimney in a thick cloud, blown hither and thither by the fitful gusts of the wind; before the house the two sentinels walked with a precision which showed their officer was not far off; then even as I looked he came round the gable end with my wife on his arm, and evidently much at his ease. I watched them enter the house and heard the door close, and laughed to see the sentinels relax, with a glance the one at the other.

Then mine eyes went further afield—away over miles of moorland and forest to the sea. Twelve miles as the crow flies it lay, and there lay the road to safety. Pensively I scanned it, dark and sullen under a great cloud which rolled from the east across it:

The sun became obscured, a bitter wind sprang up, and cold sleet lashed my face and drenched me to the marrow. But I sought not my shelter. The hour for action was at hand.

The soldiers crouched close to the wall of the house, and he who kept watch behind joined them to get some shelter from the storm. I saw the door open and my lady appear. She flashed one glance across the moss as she bore with steady hands a massive jug to the soldiers.

The storm increased in fury, but she stood erect, and seemed to chide the men with laughter for their cowering. Then she entered the house with the empty jug:

At an upper window by-and-by appeared old Ronald's head cautiously thrust out, his long, shaggy beard waving in the wind. One of the soldiers had sunk to the ground, the other two leant half-dazed against the wall. Gradually they, too, sank to the ground, and on the instant Ronald's head was withdrawn. Another, and he was outside and the three muskets in his possession. Two he placed behind the door, with the other he mounted guard over the prostrate soldiers:

Presently my lady again appeared. With a nod Ronald handed her the musket and walked to the edge of the moss. Ere he

could give the signal I sprang up, and he stifled the sound in his throat.

My lady ran within, Ronald like a whirlwind followed her, and I, bounding from tuft to tuft with mighty strides, reached the hillock.

A shout came from within, and in mingled wrath and fear I flung myself through the door into the low-raftered kitchen. But all was well.

Ronald sat on the prostrate form of the officer hard by the fire, while my lady held her piece to his head. Quickly I bound his hands and feet, and then only did I greet my wife. As I turned she wavered, the musket dropped with a clatter, and with a glad cry she flung herself into my arms.

Gently I caressed her and set her down in the old oak chair, the while the officer regarded us with gloomy, wrathful eyes. Then with haste we dragged the soldiers to the kitchen, and laid them, securely bound and gagged, by their officer. And then at last Ronald spoke.

"We have the whole day clear before us," he said. "The others will not be back till the morning. They search Craig-Dhu for you," and he laughed grimly.

The officer scowled and muttered an oath. Beaten by a woman and a half-witted old dotard, he bitterly thought. My wife turned to me.

"Roderick, he—he—he tried to kiss me," she said, and pointed an angry finger at the man, while a hot blush mounted to her brow.

With an angry oath I sprang towards him, my hand on my dirk, and for a moment had nigh forgotten he was my prisoner. But my lady's hand restrained me, and as I turned and saw her beauty I almost forgave the insult.

Without a word to the man I beckoned Ronald to me and whispered low. He stooped, and with scarce an effort lifted him to his shoulders and bore him from the room.

Our preparations for flight were few and soon made. We dare not start before dark; so, when Ronald had one by one removed the men and laid them in a place of security, my gracious lady and I sat by the fire hand-in-hand and sought to read our future in the dancing flames, while Ronald kept trusty ward without.

At the first sign of twilight, Ronald brought my lady's pony to the door—a shaggy, swift-footed beast. It was only then that I chanced to see myself reflected in a small mirror that hung in my wife's

apartment, and I gazed in wonder the while my lady's laugh rang merrily out.

Torn and tattered, disheveled and muddy, full of peat-stains was my dress, and my beard was unkempt and shaggy. A sorry figure I looked to be squire to a lady, and liker my own servant than the son of a Highland Chieftain.

Our preparations, few and scanty as they were, had long been made. I lifted my lady to the saddle, securely tied our paltry baggage behind, and, taking the bridle, beckoned to Ronald silently to follow. But first he threw the muskets into a peat-hole, and muttering low oaths in Gaelic, made sure of the prisoners' fastenings. Then he fast locked the door, sent the key to join the muskets, and, shouldering his piece, followed us in silence.

Darkness settled down quickly, and though I knew well every step of the moor, yet had I to keep my wits about me to lead the pony aright, and to avoid any sound which might bring a straggling band of red-coats upon us.

By rough, moorland paths, and oft-times through bog and marsh, and over quaky peat, we made our way, and scant time or will had we for talk.

At last we struck the edge of Darnaway forest, and for full two hours found our path with difficulty through the thick darkness, stumbling over roots and branches, hampered ever by the thick undergrowth, and uncertain of our way. For though I knew the forest tolerably well, yet in that great blackness I was oft-times brought to a standstill, and 'twas only my woodland lore, which men call instinct, and an occasional glimpse of a star through the thick branches, which brought us at last to the moor beyond.

And now had come the really dangerous part of our journey. But two miles lay between us and the small hamlet by the sea which we aimed to reach, but it seemed scarce possible that we should make it unseen.

The noise we had made in the forest may have been magnified in our fearsome ears, but to me it seemed well-nigh impossible that every red-coat in the country round would not have divined there were fugitives abroad and hasten to the scene. For the country thereabouts was well patrolled, and the people already cowed.

The first of the two remaining miles we made in safety, and then came our first real check. The great road lay before us, and it we had to cross to gain the sea: Ronald went ahead and reported all was

clear, and cautiously we went to cross it: And then our luck failed:

Of a sudden the moon swept from behind a cloud and flooded the country with light: Far up the road its light fell on a solitary figure, and as we all unthinkingly halted his challenge rang out:

My wits returned: I struck the pony, pulled hard at its head, and gained the stretch of half-cultivated country that lay between us and the sea: A shot rang out, and a moment later an outcry along the road:

In silence we raced on, but the din behind grew louder. Then a shot sounded very near, and I turned my head: Old Ronald had dropped behind a peat stack, and in the ghastly moonlight I saw the smoke floating upward from his piece. And then for a moment a silence fell. I divined his purpose and dragged the pony, well-nigh spent, to further efforts.

A long, straggling line of trees and bushes loomed before us. Beyond them lay safety: My breath came short and fast, the pony panted and staggered: I glanced at my dear lady. Her face was pale, but she sat erect and held my musket in her grasp:

The silence was suddenly broken: A scattering volley rang out and died away, then a solitary shot: The trees were scarce a hundred yards away. Nearer and nearer they loomed, shots began to follow one another quickly, then my ears, strained to every sound, caught the patter of running feet:

We reached the trees, pushed furiously through a bank of whins and dropped on the soft sand below: The pony fell on its haunches, but I lifted my lady lightly off, and dragged it to its feet. Quickly I turned its head from the glimmering light of the hamlet, and giving it two fierce strokes sent it rushing wildly along the sands. Then hastily we ran a little beside the bank of whins and presently lay down in the deep shadow.

Then once again fortune smiled. A great black cloud obscured the moon, and we could scarce see a few yards away.

A soldier leapt from the bank, hesitated a second, and followed hard after the flying pony, firing his musket as he ran: Two others quickly followed, then again a silence fell, and though I strained mine ears to the utmost, no sound, save the indistinct noise of their feet as they stumbled along the beach, could I hear:

Then quietly we rose to our feet, and rapidly, keeping the while close under the bank of whins, approached the hamlet: The shots had aroused the fishermen, and

I feared lest we should find red-coats among them: But danger lurked behind, and the hope of safety lay in front.

The whins came to an end, but the moon was still obscured: So, stooping low, we sought the water's edge, and under the cloak of the friendly darkness, hastened onwards:

A hundred yards on the west side of the hamlet, I had been told, and eagerly I looked for our friends: But all we could see was a medley of lights among the huts, and all we could hear a confused noise of shouting:

The tide was nigh full in and rushing to our feet. I judged we had reached our appointed place, and vainly tried to pierce the darkness for sign of a boat. But I could see nothing, so I drew my lady to me, and together we crouched on the sand waiting for what might betide:

Presently I became aware of an increase in the confused noise among the huts, and voices could be distinctly heard: Then a shot was fired, and pandemonium seemed let loose. Next moment a voice at my shoulder made me start to my feet in affright, to find old Ronald at my side and with him a stalwart fisherman:

Again the moon stole from behind the cloud, and I saw in the instant a boat swinging at anchor a bare twenty paces off, and along the sands what looked like a big *mêlée*.

"Quick!" gasped Ronald, and on the word he seized my lady and carried her to the boat. The fisherman and I followed, splashing hastily through the water, and scrambled eagerly aboard:

A shot whistled past my head, and another and another. I forced my lady beneath the gunwale as Ronald, with an oath, cut the rope. A crowd of fishermen and soldiers was on the beach we had just left, and already some of the red-coats were in the water. One near reached the boat, the shots from his comrades impeding our efforts to get the sail hoisted, when Ronald, with a mighty sweep of his oar, struck him down:

The fisherman shouted to us to row, and furiously we tugged at the oars, the while the sail slowly went up: I heard a dull thud and a gasp, and half turned my head, but Ronald's "Row, row!" stopped me:

At last the sail was up, a gust of wind filled it, and we felt the water rippling under our keel. In a minute or two we were out of range, and I dragged in my oar, well-nigh spent:

A cry from my wife made me turn hastily: Ronald was doubled over his oar, and even as I looked pitched forward a huddled heap

in the bottom of the boat. I sprang to his side and raised him gently. My wife knelt among the riot of fish and bones and all manner of uncleanness, and pillowed his head in her lap. From his side blood was flowing, and without avail I endeavoured to staunch it. Of a sudden his eyes opened and he murmured something.

"Och, Roderick maital," he said, using the old, endearing term of my boyhood, "I'm done. But you'll win through. And the bonnie lady"—he stretched out his hand, and very tenderly she put her small hand in his. He stroked it gently for a minute, then with a smile, and in his native Gaelic, "I'm just about to die," he said, "and the second sight has come. It comes to all our race when we reach the end."

He paused, then raised himself suddenly and pointed ahead through the darkness: "Darkness, and then light, and the sun shining, and the birds singing on bonny Tombhan. You'll win to your own again, Roderick maital," and he fell back with closed eyes.

For a moment I thought he was gone, but as the boat pitched violently his eyes opened and his hand moved feebly: I bent over to catch the last, low, muttered words, but though his eyes looked at me he knew me not:

He poured forth a flood of words in Gaelic, of expostulation and intreaty they seemed, but they were too low for me to catch them all. Then suddenly I heard my father's name, and the dying eyes lit up with an ardent fire and the voice rang out:

"Alistair, Alistair, I come, I come!"

And so his spirit passed.

All night we sped before a fierce wind, drenched with clouds of spray, and sometimes soaked by a wave breaking over the bow.

Morning showed us a tossing sea, a sullen

sky, and Scotland grey and forbidding on our lee. My lady was wet and shivering, and Ronald's body lay stiff at my feet. So I directed the fisherman to shape our course for land, and towards noon we ran into a little bay hard by Embo. There we found naught but a turf hut, but they were kindly folk, and right gladly took us in.

It was good after that bitter night to see again a warm fire, even though the room was low, and full of the reek of the peats, and hens and pigs disputed our places by the fire.

Then, before we again set sail, we dug on a high promontory old Ronald's grave, and laid him to rest with his plaid around him and his claymore by his side. My wife wept bitter tears as she gazed on his face, calm and peaceful in death, and even I was sore moved so that I had to turn my face away. For he had given his life for me and mine, and had died as he himself would have chosen. May God rest his soul!

And so, after days of hiding in quiet bays and nights of tossing on the sea, we came at last to safety on the island of Foula—an island of the Shetlands, twenty long miles from its nearest neighbour. There no news of the dark doings in Scotland came to us, and no danger approached, for the island is but seldom visited, and then has but one hard entrance. And when at last the evil days were passed, we crossed in safety to France, and thence, by the good offices of one high in the Government who had always stood my friend, to Scotland once more.

And so old Ronald's words came true, and the dark days came to an end, and we came again to the home of my fathers, and saw the sun shining and heard the birds singing on bonnie Tombhan.

I WONDER WHY!

By H. D. D.

When first we met in the ball-room

We both were shy;

He bowed, then asked for a two-step—

I wonder why?

We did not dance, but sat it out—

I felt less shy.

Strange! the weather was not discussed—

I wonder why?

He asked two dances later on

(He was not shy!)

I cut another man for him—

I wonder why?

After the ball he came to call—

Neither was shy.

He took me to a theatre then—

I wonder why?

But now I always wonder why

We felt so shy,

For he's the dearest man I know—

My husband now.

STORIES IN VERSE.

Readers who are fond of reciting are recommended to learn some of the pieces published in this feature. All of them are admirably adapted to recitation. Application for permission to make use of the pieces in public should be made to the Editor, *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The Squire's Daughter. ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By MARY FARRAH.

Now list to the tale of a sailor lad
Who sailed the stormy water,
And how he won, in spite of her dad,
Sweet Kitty, the Squire's daughter!

They had loved (in secret) for years and years,
As long as they both could remember,
And at last Jack whispered his hopes and
fears,
One evening in sweet September.

They had met (of course, by accident, quite),
Such accidents are surprising!
And the maiden's answer he read aright
In the blush there was no disguising:

O'er this interview a kindly veil
Let us draw, but somewhat later
Young Jack found his courage sadly faint
When he interviewed her Pater.

For he talked of rank and of pedigree,
And inquired his father's rental—
'Twas clear he thought a son of the sea
As a son-in-law detrimental.

Sweet Kitty vowed she would marry her Jack,
Or remain a maiden ever,
But the Squire had vowed (and sworn, alack!)
She should wed his neighbour, Sir Trevor.

Sir Trevor was old, and bald, and lame,
But he'd money-bags in plenty,
So on crutches of gold Sir Trevor came
A-courting sweet one-and-twenty.

Fair Mistress Kitty his suit declined,
And promised to be his sister;
(To handsome Jack she had been more kind,
And already the rogue had kissed her!)

Then her father locked her up in a room,
And placed the key in his pocket.
"Consent, or starvation shall be your doom,
For no one," he said, "can unlock it!"

"One promise indeed I can safely make—
You may marry your Jack next minute,
If he finds a way from this cage to take
The bird I have shut up within it!"

"Your chance," he laughed, "of escape is
small"—
His words might well be emphatic—
For the room was right at the top of the Hall,
Of the kind that we call an attic.

But the Squire forgot (and that explains
Why parents will be so stupid)
That Love the locksmith's art disdains,
All cages fly open to Cupid!

As soon as sweet Kitty was left alone
She wrote to her Jack a letter—
The custom's to tie such things to a stone,
But a slipper's as good, or better.

Then out of the window her slipper she threw,
After slipping the note in the toe of it.
"If only," she thought, "he finds my shoe,
If there is any way, he'll know of it!"

Now Jack was (luckily) taking a stroll,
And, how or why there's no telling,
An impulse he tried in vain to control
Attracted him near her dwelling.

He was thinking of Kitty's first kiss so sweet,
And hoped 'twas of more the presage,
When, looking downwards, he saw at his feet
Her shoe, and soon read its message.

A handy-man, and a man of craft
Was our heroine's sailor-lover;
"Some way to save her," he grimly laughed,
"Full quickly I must discover!"

"Her father, she writes, his word has passed,
And his word's his bond in the city.
Eureka! I have it!" he cried at last,
"I know how to win my Kitty!"

That night Sir Trevor lay full of care
(For the bride's consent he waited);
A crust of bread was his lady's fare,
While he like a Prince was jêted:

He tossed and he turned in woeful plight,
I scarcely need add the reason,
He had supped, well, not like an anchorite,
On some dishes out of season.

To sleep, or not to sleep, was in fact
For him a debated question—
His frame (not his conscience, alas!) was
racked
By a fit of indigestion:

When a cry of fire he suddenly heard,
All his thoughts from slumber turning;
He sprang from his couch at the dreadful word,
Quite certain the bed was burning.

"Help! robbers!" he cried, "thieves! murder!
fire!"
At the top of his voice he shouted,
He woke the servants, he roused the Squire,
And of course there was no one doubted.

"My child!" gasped the Squire. "Oh!
who will save
My child from the conflagration?"
Outside stood a fireman tall and brave
With the fire-escape from the station.

He climbed the ladder, then down he came,
In his arms sweet Kitty bearing;
She was quite unharmed by the smoke or flame,
As she clung to the youth so daring.

"Your name?" cried her sire, "for such a deed
Pray tell me how best to reward you!"
A voice that he knew answered: "All I need
Is the daughter I've just restored you!"

He started, he frowned, he stared, dismayed,
'Twas Jack, or he still must be dreaming!
(Don't ask me what Jack paid the fire-brigade
In bribes for help in his scheming!)

"You promised," said Jack, "she should be
my own
If I opened the cage for the bird, sir!
You're a man of your word, it's very well
known,
So we've taken you just at your word, sir!"

"Forgive us!" said Kitty, determined to win
With a little more teasing and pressing;
And of course the Squire at last gave in,
And gave them his fatherly blessing.

"But the fire? Where is it?" perplexed, he
cried.

"I think, although it is late, sir,
You'll find there's a fire," the maid replied,
"Still burning within the grate, sir!"

A Wonderful Invention.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ By CLIVE PEMBERTON.

I tell you this story, believing it true,
At least, it was told so to me,
By a quaint individual I came across—
On the shore down at Skipton-on-Sea.

He looked at my pipe and then blew through
his own,
So I proffered a fill from my box;
With avidity keen he soon rammed a charge in—
After tapping the bowl on the rocks.

He talked of the different things he had seen—
And he seemed to have been everywhere.

"Then pray what were you when well off?"
I inquired.

"A showman," he said, "at the Fair.

"Now, I 'ad a show, mind, that never was beat
By any that went on the road;
I'd a company chock full o' talent and brains,
Includin' a real dancin' toad!

"But the man I shall never, no never forget
Was Bob Turner—the pride o' the Fair;
'E played down in the show, but at inventing
things
He was truly a genius rare.

"I'd noticed that Bob had been busy o' days
A-working away in his van;
One mornin' 'e strolls up an', winkin' at me,
Says: 'I guess, boss, the coin we'll now pan!

"For I've been a-workin' this brain 'ere o' mine,
Inventin' of somethin'—my word!
When it's seen—well, we shan't get 'em in
quick enough!"
Says I: 'Bob, you're talkin' absurd!'

"We ain't taken nothing the whole o' the week,
And how to pay screws I don't know!"
'You'll soon laugh at screws,' he replied,
'when you see
The attraction I've got for the show.'

" 'We've had Bearded Ladies and Dwarfs by the score—

Also Freaks what 'ave quite had their day ;
Now what would you say to a real live
MERMAID

With a TAIL? Come, boss, what do you say?'

" 'Just come to my van in ten minutes,' says he.

I went, and as true as I stand,
In a tank was a Mermaid a-swimmin' about,
And strokin' her tail with her hand!

" The tank was of glass, and as closer I looked
I saw that the Mermaid was—'im!

Yes—Bob with long 'air and a wonderful tail,
That tapered down graceful an' slim.

" 'Now, what do you think o' that tail, boss?' says Bob,

When 'e stood on his feet in my van ;
'It goes by clockwork for two hours at one wind!'

Says I: 'Bob, you're a wonderful man!'

" The whole of that week Bob an' I worked the plant,

An' the people they all took it in ;
Till at last the news spread and it got to the ears

Of the Mayor of the town—Major Flynn.

" I'm blest if 'e didn't come up to the show
One mornin', an' says 'e to me :

'Mister Showman, I've 'eard that a Mermaid is 'ere,
But the story sounds fishy to me!'

" 'Your worship,' I answers, 'I'm perfectly free

To admit that your disbelief's sound ;
But seein's believin'—to-night come an' see.'
'So I will!' he says, strikin' the ground.

" He took fifteen seats in the front, an' says 'e :

'There'll be Alderman Bryce nex' to me,
And plenty of other shrewd men o' the town,
To inspect your Mermaid from the sea.'

" It soon got about who was going to be there,
And the crowd came from twenty mile round.

The Mayor and his Aldermen turned up in State,
Such a sight ne'er was seen, I'll be bound.

" The great moment came an' I stepped to the front

O' the curtain that hid Bob from view ;
An' I told how the Mermaid was found in Greenland,

An' nearly sent off to the Zoo!

" Then I pulled back the curtain, an' there in the tank

Was the Mermaid a-swimmin' around ;
The Mayor looked at each of his Aldermen, and

Says he: 'This is truly profound!'

" I looked at 'em all with a smile easy-like,
Then I turned round an' looked at the wonder ;

Imagine my shock when I saw at a glance,
That the Tail was a-comin' asunder!

" The clock-work that gave it the action so real
Had gone wrong—that was plain to my eye ;
For it lashed up the water an' whirled Bob about!

To the curtain I straightway did fly.

" But e'er I could touch it I 'card a loud splash—

A cry—then a strange soundin' slap!
I looked round, and then—well, then I nearly died,

For the Mermaid was on the Mayor's lap!

" 'Help! Help!' cried poor Bob, quite forgettin' his part,

As the tail nearly brained the Mayor's brother!

Then it somehow caught Alderman Bryce sich a bang,

After dustin' the floor with another!

" With no little trouble the giant an' I
Freed Bob from the Mayor who was speakin'.

'E was vowin' that 'e'd have us all put in gaol,
When a voice cried: 'The tank's started leakin'!'

" The spring broke at last, and we got the tail off

Of poor Bob, who was nearly 'alf dead ;
But 'e looked up at me with a queer sort o' grin

And, 'We'd better be off, boss!' he said:

" We got the whole show on the road in an hour,
Though stopped I expected we'd be ;

And I never again had the courage to show
A Mermaid alive from the sea."

The New Nellie. ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ By A. C. JOHNSON.

The story of a stowaway.

WHEN it was discovered that the new engineer of the ss. *Nellie* was married, the fact was received with different feelings by his fellow-officers. The mate gave a swift look of surprised pity and sympathy at the smooth-faced youngster.

"Poor lad!—shouldn't have thought it! Oh, well, he'll be steady, anyway."

And this was somewhat the thought of the young and energetic chief, who was sick to death of scratch thirds—green hands who were sick, and old hands who were drunk. The Old Man knew about it first, for the new engineer had given an address—"Mrs. Thompson, Ivy Cottage, Ladysmith Road, Peckham, S.E.," for his half-pay to be sent to, in such a way that the skipper had said:

"Mother, Mr. Thompson?"

And he had replied: "No, sir! *Wife!*" with quite a proud little blush.

The skipper thought him a young fool, and so at first did the second engineer, who, by all laws of "tramp" brotherhood, was to be the third engineer's chum ashore in all riotous living.

The second engineer was a grass-widower from deliberate choice, the despair of ambitious young thirds under him, who wanted him to go ashore, and give them a "step," and the comfort of his chief in that he stayed by the ship where he knew he was safe, and despised women, and those who tied themselves legally to them.

So most of them chaffed the youngster, who everlastingly wrote to and spoke very seldom of "the wife," and was careful almost to abstemiousness as to getting money from the skipper abroad, and as to how he spent it.

But all this was two or three voyages ago: a long year and more they had known each other now, and were as fond of each other as only sailors can be.

Captain Rosston was still a crusty old bachelor, and the chief engineer a man who wouldn't trust any woman sufficiently to marry her, while still sea-going, but the kindly old mate was an occasional sharer

of confidences as a fellow-sufferer who was "breaking up the happy home to keep it going," as he put it, while the second officer, rather than go ashore on the loose by himself, had steadied down almost to the third himself, with a bicycle on board as a proof that you must spend money on something.

During this time Mr. and Mrs. Thompson had only met twice; the young third knew his work, and wasn't very green, though he did seem a bit surprised that he couldn't have a few days' leave between trips to run up to London, but on one of the summer voyages Fortune favoured them.

The *Nellie* discharged at a pretty little Bristol Channel port, was there for a fortnight, and another week at her loading-port close by, so the lonely young wife had a delightful month's holiday by the sea, with her husband's company every evening.

What a while ago that seemed now!—they had had a soul-vexing voyage, begun on a Friday and ending in a week's fog all round the coast; they had been ordered to new and uncomfortable quarters "out East," had lost all their letters abroad, and had come from the Black Sea to Hull to discharge wheat, and to find still no letters.

"I must run up before Sunday," said the frantic third; "I can't even get a reply to my wire."

"Give 'em a chance," said the unmarried chief; "we only got in this morning. Look here, they'll get us out in another couple of days. You clear off; I'll lend the second a hand. Brownlie and I can work her round to Cardiff ourselves. That's all right," he added, choking off the third's thanks; "and, I say, don't you worry about letters; no news is good news. Come down sharp Sunday night, you know; we must get away Monday morning with that Admiralty coal for Malta."

Sunday night came and preparations were being made to leave port.

"Tide in two hours," said the skipper; "where's the third?"

"Oh, he's all right!" said the chief.

"I said Sunday night, and I'm expecting him every moment."

But steam was trembling through the safety valves, and ropes were being cast off preparatory to moving down the dock before the third appeared, and then he went straight down to the bottom platform, where the second stood by the levers and the chief was walking to and fro.

"Hullo, Mr. Thompson, just in time—we're going out to-night. I knew you'd turn up!" were the chief's first words.

"You look seedy, my lad," said Brownlie, the second.

"I—I'm afraid I can't stop, sir!" stammered Thompson.

"Can't stop! Why, what do you mean? Who's to take your place?"

"Well, I'll work her down the river, if you like, but you'll have to wait, and get another third in the morning. I can't sail!"

"Going to leave us! Why, what's the matter, old chap?" said the chief. "I ought to have asked after the wife before—how did you find things?"

"She's—dead!" burst from the lips of the young fellow, who now made no effort to control the emotion he had schooled himself to conceal from his mates.

"Good Heavens!" cried the chief, shocked and bewildered by this totally unexpected blow. The second said nothing, thinking all sorts of thoughts as he bit savagely into his pipe, watching the sobbing young fellow, who had sat down on the bottom step of the ladder, and buried his face in his hands. Both men felt an unaccustomed impulse to comfort him, to put their arms round him; but they only said—or the chief did, knowing that the lad was quite friendless:

"Can't you come with us, and try to forget things a bit, old man?"

The third sprang up, shaking off the chief's kindly hand on his shoulder, and flung out his arms wildly:

"I must go ashore again, sir: I—I've left all my stuff and—"

"Let's send someone for it."

"No, there's—there's lots of things, all sorts—"

"Well, go and fetch 'em," said the chief, who now believed it the best thing to do to hustle the dazed lad, to worry him on board, and into harness for his own good. "You're the lucky third of the company, you know, with a berth to yourself," he added, convinced that Thompson was loath

to part with otherwise useless and cumbersome knick-knacks and mementoes of his poor young wife.

"Ah, but you don't know. I must tell you—"

"Tell me nothing! Off with you, and bring it all aboard, sewing-machine, poil-parrot, whatever it is!" and fairly pushed him up the ladder.

* * * * *

Nobody noticed him particularly in the bustle as he came on board again.

While his belongings were being settled he was down below in a boiler suit with the key of his berth in his pocket, almost in his right mind, but with a curious, inexplicable look of listening, as if in momentary expectation of being called.

He lent a hand until about midnight the message came "Full speed ahead," then, when everything was in going order, the third's watch, the dreary middle watch, began:

"S'pose you turn in, youngster," said Brownlie; "you look as if you could do with it."

"Oh, no, Mr. Brownlie, thanks all the same; she's all right I think—I mean, four o'clock will soon come. I just want to run up to the berth for a minute while you're here."

He washed his hands carefully before he went up, but was soon back again, and finally the second left him with half his watch to go.

Meanwhile the second had taken a bottle and a spare glass into the chief's berth, and they were now talking things over.

Their cabins, with a bathroom between, opened from the top platform on to the starboard alleyway, the opposite side giving access to the third's berth, and a cosy little messroom, where it was the custom to allow the "engineer's steward" (a West country kiddie) to sleep in bad weather, to save sending him forward.

"Dead, eh?" said the second, after a thoughtful drink. "I wish I was sure mine was."

"Poor lad!" said the chief; "it's a hard finish to a short romance. They were all alone in the world, you know; took pity on each other from the start, married to make a home for each other, and the hard times ashore sent him seagoing. I expect she ruined her constitution hospital nursing. Well, I hope we've done the right thing by him," he added after a while.

"Yes," said Brownlie; "I don't want to go fooling about with a new third; though, of

course, Thompson 'll be going for his ticket soon; but it's ill news to start a voyage with——" He broke off abruptly, and each man glanced at the other with the unspoken question in his eyes: "What was that noise?" and then each mentally decided he was mistaken.

"Well, here's luck!" said the chief.

"Let's hope so," responded the second doubtfully, when like an echo, unmistakably this time, a mysterious sound caused both men to start instinctively towards the engine-room ladder, where they nearly fell over the third on his way up, looking embarrassed, not to say alarmed:

"What is it, Mr. Thompson—anything hot?"

"No-o—oh, no, sir! I was just coming up to see."

"I'll be down soon," said the second, as the third returned; "I'll break that kiddie's neck if he's brought that mouth-organ from for'ard!" he added to the chief, who said slyly:

"Might have been a Banshee, eh?"

"I'll run up and see if they heard it on deck; perhaps it's somebody else's syren," suggested Brownlie.

"Oh, well, I'll turn in, if you're sure you're not nervous," returned the chief. But neither of them felt like laughing when the wail—a long, heartbroken yell of despair—broke out for the third time, and seemed to play all around them. The messroom door flew open and the diminutive steward, clad in shirt and trousers, stood trembling before them.

"What be it, zur? I be scaired of my life, I be."

"So it is you, you young blackguard! kicking up that unearthly row?" said the second. "I'll bundle you off for'ard if you don't sleep quietly without dreaming."

"It bean't I, zur; surelie it bean't?"

"Oh, well, it's the cat," said the chief; and the boy was bundled back to his locker, and the second wished the chief a sweet sleep and prepared for his four hours on:

His junior seldom had any need to call him, and certainly never had to wait over his time for relief; on this occasion he was going towards the ladder well before four, when the sound—that terrible sound—broke out again, and transfixed him where he stood. At the same time the third, washed, and with his braces hanging loose from his trousers, rushed up and past him, as if impatient, dived into his berth, and locked the door behind him:

"It's got on his nerves, anyway!" growled Brownlie, and as he settled into the monotony of the watch, he was consumed with curiosity; the terrible sound did not trouble him again, but apparently there was no sleep for the third, or for the kiddie, and they seemed to have a secret between them: They had the messroom stove alight, and water boiling, and the boy was running about with bundles and things which had been left lying about the night before:

Thompson was helping the boy carefully along with one of the packages across the top platform, when the sound broke out again, and the third dropping his end of the box he had been so careful of, made one jump to his berth and disappeared:

"Eight bells" came again, the donkeyman relieved the second, and the chief asked him how things were going as they met at the breakfast-table:

"Oh, all serene now. Heard any more yelling?"

"No, not since——" He stopped as the third staggered in with a shawl and blanket-covered bundle in his arms, from which, drowning his conciliatory "Good-morning," proceeded again that mysterious but now familiar sound, the unmistakable, never-to-be-forgotten wail of an eight-months-old baby.

"A baby! Good Heavens!" gasped the horrified second. The chief summoned all his dignity, and, half-rising from his seat, he said:

"What does this mean, Mr. Thompson? The *Nellie* isn't a nursery, you know, and the owners don't pay you to suckle infants."

The third had wedged himself into his accustomed corner at the table, where the kiddie had jammed a special cup of warm milk alongside the third's porridge. He looked up and said respectfully, but firmly:

"Well, sir, I wanted to tell you last night what I had ashore, and why I couldn't sail, but you told me to bring it aboard, whatever it was, and—and, well here we are, and you can't put us ashore before Malta," and then went on blowing his porridge, dipping a spoonful into the milk, and conveying it awkwardly to the mouth of the bundle.

How they got through the meal they hardly knew; the second terrified, the chief disgusted, the kiddie frankly bursting with unholy joy, blissfully unconscious of the extra laundry-maid and nurse-girl duties lying in the future for him. Brownlie hurriedly sought the deck for his digestive

smoke, the chief went down below and gave the donkeyman a bad quarter of an hour, and then went up and burst into the third's berth, falling over much unusual litter as he did so—only to find himself (respectfully but firmly) pushed gently out into the messroom by his junior, who then stood at attention to his chief's remarks, with one ear cocked towards his berth.

"Well, I suppose there's no getting you to 'turn to' in the mornings *this* voyage?" he began.

"On the contrary, sir," said Thompson, whose charge was now safely asleep in the spare bunk (the *Nellie* was built for four engineers), "I am just going on deck to have a look round and start work, unless the second's picked out anything special for me; and I want to say at once, sir, that, with your permission, I am willing to pay anybody and everybody anything to do what I can't do; it shan't interfere with my work."

"I've been into the steering engine," chipped in Brownlie, entering before the bewildered chief could frame a fitting reply, "and the winches won't want touching on the run out; you attend to your baby, and when I want you I'll say so. I'm not going to have it said that we didn't give it a chance," he added to the chief, who was instantly mollified, and it was not the third alone who was nearly crying as he turned appealingly to them.

"What *could* I do?" he said. "She died the day we arrived; I never saw her alive, and there are letters and letters about the child and her illness waiting at Malta, and everywhere we didn't go. I buried her, and the nurse, who had been her only friend all this time, was going to keep the child, but I felt I should go mad if I went to sea and left it, if I hadn't something to remind me of her, and I *was* mad, mad enough to act on your advice and bring it!"

"But what do you know about kids?" said Brownlie. "How are you going to do all the feeding and washing, and—and dressing, and all that sort of tommyrot? What is it, a boy or girl?"

"Girl," said Thompson, who was trying hard to pull himself together. "We'll manage somehow. Thanks awfully for the way you're taking it."

Released from any extra duty before his watch at twelve noon, Thompson concluded an exhaustive survey of the impedimenta consequent upon his new departure. The precious box they carried in last was regret-

fully heaved overboard, containing biscuits and foods irretrievably damaged by sea water, and, most serious of all, among a litter of broken dolls and rattles lay the wrecks of a dozen feeding-bottles smashed by that last unlucky accident.

Bundles of white, warm, fleecy clothing were aired, and drawers and lockers emptied for them. Trunks, boxes, and bundles were stowed under the bottom bunk, and the bunk itself made as safe and comfortable as its width and its straw mattress would permit.

The motherly nurse, in the journey down from London, had taught him many things in the care and management of infants, and when she was forcibly relieved of her charge on that Sunday evening, she had the sense to add "Doctor Somebody's Mothers' Guide" to the hastily selected wardrobe and necessaries.

But this did not help him much now, as it insisted on most of the things that were jettisoned. The nurse had sworn by "Milk, and plenty of it," to be sure, but how to administer it without a bottle?

"The old mate's the only man on board who can tell me anything, but I can't worry him this weather; he's had no sleep yet." And so for awhile Thompson showed the boy how to ladle the warm milk into the small mouth with a spoon.

The kiddie had been forcibly enlisted into the service in the dead of night, and was gloating over a half-sovereign given him on account. He was a willing recruit, however, and made an admirable nurse, his only trouble being that it wasn't a boy baby.

The second had actually told him that he might play (softly) on his mouth-organ to amuse the baby, and the chief had put him on his mettle by threatening to hammer him if the baby cried when the third was on watch. This danger was nearly always averted, at least temporarily, by dipping the "comforter" in the condensed milk and popping it in where the sound came from.

Meanwhile the weather got worse and remained bad for days, and so long as the heaving and rolling continued, the infant seemed dazed and sleepy and gave very little trouble, beyond one awful night, when the third most unjustifiably left his engines and rescued the baby from the clutches of the kiddie as they rolled over and over on the milk-strewn floor of the cabin.

The boy always slept with one ear open, and used to go out and fetch the sop which

the third kept warm on the cylinder covers, but it needed much skill to administer it efficiently. Together they reclothed the poor infant, and the third determined that he would even dare to call the second to relieve him if he had such a fright again:

The mate was worshiping at the shrine of baby at his very first opportunity. It was years since he had seen one of his own so small, and was full of fatherly reminiscence and practical advice.

"Get a soda-water bottle," he said.

"Yes, but what about the suction valve, the teat, or whatever you call it?"

"H'm, can't we fix the 'dummy' somehow?"

"What's the dummy? Oh, that thing—the 'comforter.' Good idea!"

"We'll try it." But it didn't last long, and it was the only one they had.

Baby had greedily approved of the soda-water bottle, and the success of the experiment made the third think very hard, and the very sight of the second mate, for the first time this voyage, gave him an idea; he had rushed down in his oilskins on the way to the bridge.

"Let's see the stowaway! So sorry, old chap! cheer up! God bless my soul! look at its little hands! What a rum little cuss! Feet, too! look at its pink toes! God bless my soul, it's going to cry!" and, with a half-frightened look, half jealous of his chum's new toy, he climbed out on deck. But he was hardly off the bridge again, ere the third burst into his cabin, and started talking "bike," so that the second mate, welcoming this sign of returning sanity, unpacked and showed him a new light racing inner tube of best quality.

"How much do you want for it?"

"Eh? Want for it? What do you want a new tube for? Besides, I don't want to sell."

"Never mind. You can get another, can't you? Five shillings and elevenpence, wasn't it? I'll order a new pair from Malta for you." And he actually robbed the dead-tired seaman before his eyes, and tore back to his quarters.

All that afternoon on watch he had a section of the tube soaking in constantly renewed hot water, till soft and pliable, then carefully stretched over a small file handle, and tenderly dried and washed again. After tea he fixed the "teat" thus formed, in the neck of the bottle by the aid of a cork, perforated it, and, hey presto! the deed was done.

Every man on board was an unblushing baby-worshiper; the chief and the second had quite entered into the joke; the mess-room was the reception-room, and no one tumbled into the third's berth now noisily or with pipe on. The old mate came and kissed her every day, and the steward came running in as soon as he heard of that unlucky box with a tin of patent food the shop people had sent by mistake. He claimed to have saved her life; and, anyway, she was soon visibly fattening on six soda-water bottles per day and four at night, with all sorts of terribly unorthodox things at intervals.

The cook was always rather suspicious that the boy got most of the indigestible dainties he made her on the sly, but continued his offerings all the same.

The donkeyman, as the third relieved him, always asked anxiously how she was standing it, and the third invited him up to have a look at her.

"Lor' lumme!" he said, "this is a fair knock-ah! and she ain't arf like the missus, neither; I see 'er at Sharpness. What yer goin' to call 'er, sir?"

This was a moot point, until the sacred lost letters should be recovered, as the nurse had mentioned no name, and he had been too heartbroken to think of it.

"Call her 'Nellie,' *pro tem*, old man," said the second mate; and the kiddie stole a strip of linen from the bo'sun's locker, marked "Nellie," intended to be tacked on to the new signal bag, and sewed it into a bib, and thus it was settled *pro tem*.

Baby Nellie soon became troublesome by crawling and rolling so persistently in every direction that the third used to lock a light dog-chain round her and dare the kiddie to take his eye off her while he was down below for the afternoon. The enormous increase in the daily laundry made him adopt the mate's advice as to a crawling costume, which they triumphantly turned out of a brand-new dungaree boiler suit; shortened in the leg and arm, and worn outside other clothes, they made capital "overalls."

The daily bath had been strongly objected to by Miss Nellie during bad weather, but the third persevered, and had his reward. She enjoyed it now nearly as much as the privileged few who peeped timidly in at this interesting function. But the bath really wanted hourly repetition during the initial stages of her locomotion, especially as the third used to cart her

along to where he was working on deck during the forenoons.

On rare occasions, if the Old Man were having a nap during the dog-watch, she had the bridge itself for an ideal manœuvring-ground; the third or the mate would sit on the top step of the ladder, thus closing the only exit, and she would drag herself along the spotless planking until stopped by the canvas screen, then round and back again; sometimes a gentle roll of the ship would facilitate her progress, showing that the other *Nellie* enjoyed a hand in the game.

"I believe she could *stand* if we'd let her," said Thompson, and actually would have encouraged her to walk if the more experienced mate had not whispered "bandy legs."

At Malta the skipper threatened to go ashore and do something or other about the baby, nobody knew what, or cared much; perhaps the sight of poor young Thompson's face as he came aft to claim his bundle of letters from the last voyage made him alter his mind—nothing came of it.

The third spent every spare moment with these links of the other world, and his mates left him alone with his sorrow; they would even have taken *Nellie* ashore for a row to relieve him had they not wisely feared complications with the authorities. They spent two nights there, and he rallied sufficiently to remember that there were shops ashore, spending the evening buying feeding-bottles and powder-puffs and medicines recommended by his book.

The Old Man had news which drove the baby out of his mind for awhile; the owners had ordered him, instead of to the Black Sea for wheat, to go to Tripoli for a cargo of hay, and also to pick up a *passenger*, an old friend of theirs who had been left there by his yacht, and had had enough of it.

It was only a day's run, and they had hardly time to get the ship clean from the coal cargo, but the skipper found time to send for the third, and ask him what tale he intended telling this friend of the owners when he should spot the youngster on board:

"Say? Why, tell the truth, sir," said Thompson: "They can't hurt us, and you can't do without me yet, and I don't think I've neglected my work."

"No, no, my lad—that's all right, but, for Heaven's sake, don't let 'em think I encouraged you, that's all!"

The third reassured him on that point, and got back to his letters; and now he

noticed, what he had apparently missed in his first anxious perusal of his dead wife's messages, that in the later letters the child was referred to by name, and that name was—*Nellie*!

The officers rowed the baby ashore one fine Sunday, and gave her donkey rides, and the third climbed up on a dromedary with her; and the boy bought her all the native sweetmeats, highly-coloured and worse smelling, and everybody purchased sandals, purses and horribly ugly dolls and toys. But the gift of all was the second mate's choice of a grass hammock, cunningly worked in with leather and beads.

The vessel was loaded and now awaited the advent of the passenger.

Towards twilight a native boat approached the *Nellie* and two passengers stepped on.

"H'm—Captain Rosston, I believe?"

"Good Heavens! I beg your pardon, sir—you are——"

"Dr. Burdick, at your service, and here is a letter from your owners. Don't apologise—I have to do that. Allow me to introduce my daughter. I do trust you will be able to find room for her; so sorry to incommode you."

In the hurried arrangements which followed, and the trunks being got on board, etc., Thompson seized the opportunity to take baby *Nellie* from her new hammock, slung under a boat on the bridge deck, and tuck her up cosily in the bunk for the night; and in half-an-hour they were "Full speed ahead" for England, home, and Christmas.

Several times that night the Old Man put together a little speech in which he could discharge his duty by reporting the "stowaway" incident to this representative of the owners, but the presence of the unexpected lady quite upset his calculations, and certainly complicated matters. As to accommodation, luckily there were two staterooms, or he would have insisted on the second mate using the spare bunk in the third's berth, baby notwithstanding.

At breakfast-time the next day the old gentleman and his daughter seemed quite at home. The lively girl gave the perplexed captain a splendid opening during the meal by saying: "Now, don't you really feel quite lonely and dull, Captain Rosston, when you have no women or children on board?" but he quite funk'd it, and changed the subject. He hurried the doctor away for a smoke on the quarter-deck, and was just clearing his throat to broach

the subject when he had a dreadful notification that it was, alas! too late. He had been forestalled by Fate.

The unmistakable sound of happy, girlish laughter was heard, and instinctively crossing to starboard, the captain and his passenger were more or less horrified to see Miss Burdick, seated on a partly-cut bale, holding out her arms to a barefooted, bareheaded baby, who was just being gently propelled from the arms of the kneeling third engineer, with his two superior officers, and the steward and the kiddie, as interested spectators, very jealous of baby beating the record.

The sea was a pond, and the ship perfectly steady, so Baby Nellie ventured, and staggered and shuffled and stumbled, and "walked alone" right into the lady's arms, who picked her up and hugged her.

"Bravo!" said the crowd, but the girl ran aft, and held her prize up for inspection by her father.

"Oh, papa—she can walk! Isn't she a darling? And she's only ten months old! Oh, Captain Rosston, you never told me you had a *baby* on board! And, papa, I've just heard *such* a sad story—this poor little darling's mother died a month or two ago, and baby hasn't a friend in the wide, wide world but her father, and he's such a young father, only a boy—your first officer told me all about it, Captain Rosston! I *do* feel sorry for them—but I'll be your friend, baby; I may, mayn't I, papa? However they have managed all this while without a woman I can't make out."

It was true—the kindly old mate, foreseeing what would happen, had taken time by the forelock, and enlisted the sympathy of the girl by a brief account of things.

Meanwhile, the old gentleman had taken off his glasses several times, had cleared his throat and blown his nose, and at last walked back with his daughter and the captain.

"This is the third engineer, Doctor Burdick," said the skipper. "Mr. Thompson, this gentleman is a personal friend of the owners, and I warn you that anything you say may be used as evidence against you."

"Nonsense, nonsense, captain; I merely want to ask the young man a few questions which naturally occur to me. Did you deliberately kidnap this innocent child, and expose its life to danger, and—and—discomfort, knowing you could not give it suitable attention?"

"Well, no, not deliberately, sir," said the third.

"But what about the food? Are you so liberally provided for that you have delicacies to spare to bring up infants upon?"

"Bought 'em myself, most of 'em. I owe the ship for one tin of patent food, and one soda-water bottle."

"Soda-water! What for?" And when that was all explained he wanted to know how the third managed his duties without neglecting the owners, which necessitated introducing the kiddie. "The owners pay him thirty-five shillings per month; I'm giving him about half that so far."

The diminutive steward interested the old gentleman, especially when he said: "I be main good wi' babbies, I be; us had a lot when I were a boy."

"This is all very remarkable, very remarkable indeed!" said he at last; "I don't know that I can blame you—but I wish I had known of it before," he added, glancing at the picture of his daughter swinging the child round on the sunny deck. "It may serve to keep her out of mischief," he concluded.

The baby kept the lady passenger out of mischief, and led her into a good deal more, and a lot of work, too. They got to Gibraltar all too soon—but they were a happy four days.

At the Rock they got orders for London, and had a fairly rough trip home, and just lost their Christmas ashore, thanks to fog.

Baby hung a pillow-case up for Santa Claus on Christmas Eve, and raked in Christmas boxes of such astounding quantity and quality that it will be years before she appreciates them.

* * * * *

The incident in baby Nellie's progress which stands out most distinctly just here, as making an epoch, is her first speech. Of course the second mate used to say she *had* talked to him long before the passengers came, but Miss Burdick resolutely ignored all "booh-boohs" and "gurgles," and set herself to teach her to say "Dadda"; and on Christmas morning held her up to the third to show how successful she had been.

"Say 'Merry Kissmas, Dadda,'" she told her.

"Dad—dad," said Nellie.

"And who's that?" said Thompson, pointing to the girl.

"Mum-mum," said baby.

But that is another story!

Hardcastle's Mistake. ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By FRED C. BARRY.

Showing that it does not do to take too much for granted where a woman is concerned.

"PETER!" quoth Mr. Hardcastle, to his general utility man.

"Well, what's the matter?" lazily responded Peter Horn, with a half-masticated straw between his teeth, as he looked up from the bit of harness he was mending.

"The Widow Lawson has taken the cottage at the foot of the lane."

"Tell me something I didn't know afore," said Peter, with more freedom than reverence in his manner.

"And if she sends up to borrow the rake, or the hoe, or the spade——"

"Well, what then?"

"Tell her she can't have 'em: Women are always borrowing. I knew Lawson when he was alive; he was a chronic borrower. I don't want to have anything to do with his widow."

"All right," observed Peter philosophically, and his master resumed the perusal of his newspaper once more.

"Peter!" said Mr. Hardcastle, about ten days afterwards, as he came in heated and out of breath from a walk. (Mr. Hardcastle wasn't so active as he had been before his forty-fifth birthday.)

"Well, what now?"

"I wonder if that was the Widow Lawson I saw gatherin' blackberries on the hedge of the cottage garden?"

"Sort o' slim and tall?"

"Yes."

"Blue eyes, and hair as shiny as satin?"

"Yes."

"And a little white parasol, lined with pink?"

"Yes."

"Werry likely it was," said Peter:

"But," persisted the puzzled farmer, "she doesn't look at all like a widow."

"There's as much difference in widows as there is in other folks," observed Peter drily. Mr. Hardcastle was silent for a minute or two.

"Peter!" he finally said.

"Well?"

"Has she sent to borrow anything?"

"Sent yesterday forenoon—asked if we had a screwdriver to lend—the hinge was comin' loose on the garden gate."

"And what did you tell her?"

"Said my order was contrariwise to lendin' or borrowin'."

"Peter, you are a fool!"

"'Tain't the first time you've said so, and 'tain't the first time you've been wrong," said Peter, with a calmness of demeanour that was beautiful to behold. "Hard words is considered in the wages, and I ain't the man to find fault. I only did as you told me."

"Yes, but, Peter, never mind; the next time she sends, let her have whatever she wants."

"Said somethin' about wantin' a man to come and hoe them early potatoes. Be I to go?"

"Certainly—of course. Neighbours should act like neighbours, especially in the country."

And Mr. Hardcastle sighed and wished that he were not too corpulent and unused to work to hoe the Widow Lawson's early potatoes himself. But he did the next best thing; he went over to look at the field after Peter had hoed it, and gave the widow good advice concerning a certain rocky, uphill bit of land that belonged to the cottage.

"I'd lay that down in winter rye, if I were you," said Mr. Hardcastle.

"I am so much obliged to you, said the widow sweetly. "Since poor dear John was taken away, I have no one to advise me on these subjects." And Mr. Hardcastle thought how soft and pretty her blue eyes looked as she spoke.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Peter, leaning on the handle of his hoe, "winter rye ain't the sort o' crop for that spot. Spring wheat's the only thing to grow there."

"Hold your tongue, Peter!" cried his employer testily.

"Yes, sir, I will," said Peter, with a broad grin over Mr. Hardcastle's bald head:

"And about these hyacinth beds," said the latter, recovering his equanimity. "I'll

come over this evening, if you will allow me——"

"I shall be delighted," interrupted the widow, with a smile that showed a set of teeth as white and regular as pearls.

"This evening, madam," repeated Mr. Hardcastle, with a bow, "an' we'll sketch a diagram: Hyacinths have to be humoured, Mrs. Lawson."

"So I have always heard," said the widow:

That evening, after Mr. Hardcastle had returned from discussing the momentous question of sandy soil, bulbous roots, and crescents and circles, he found Peter sitting in front of the house contentedly breathing the flower-scented air.

"A very pretty woman, that Mrs. Lawson, Peter," said the employer, not because there was any special congeniality of soul between himself and his farm hand, but because he could have talked to the gate posts if Peter hadn't happened to be there.

"Well, nobody doubts that, as I ever heard on," said Peter, with his elbows on his knees and his face turned complacently towards the full moon.

"And she can't be over thirty."

"So I should ha' said myself," assented Peter.

"I'm glad she has taken the cottage on a long lease, Peter," pursued Mr. Hardcastle. "I like good neighbours."

"Most folks does," observed Peter:

And he got up, shaking himself like a great Newfoundland dog, leaving Mr. Hardcastle to the companionship of his own cogitations: There are times when solitude is said to be the best company; perhaps this was one of the special occasions, in the estimation of Peter Horn:

The summer went by; the great chestnut in front of Mr. Hardcastle's house began to glow as if its leaves had been dipped in gold; the asters reared their heads along the stone wall by the cottage under the hill, and any acute observer might have perceived that Mrs. Lawson had laid down the rocky bit of uphill ground in spring wheat instead of winter rye:

"Peter!" said Mr. Hardcastle to his man one evening; it was the first time they had had a fire on the wide, old-fashioned hearth:

"Well?"

"I have concluded it's best for you not to live in this house any longer."

"What's goin' to happen?" said Peter. "You ain't goin' to get another man, be you?"

"No, certainly not. You suit me

admirably, Peter, only——" and Mr. Hardcastle shot the words out with an effort, "I am thinking of getting married."

"Oh!"

"It's rather late in life, to be sure," said Mr. Hardcastle, conscious of looking extremely sheepish, "but you know, Peter, it's never too late to do a good thing."

"Certainly not."

"You ought to get married, Peter," added his employer, speaking in rather a rapid and embarrassed manner:

"Think so?"

"Certainly. You might live in the little house beyond the orchard; it wouldn't take much to do it up nicely, now that paint and paper are so cheap."

Peter stared reflectively at the fire:

"And your wife could look after the cream and butter for us. It isn't likely Mrs. L—ahem!—it isn't likely, I mean, that my wife will care to do such things."

"Humph!"

"I'd advise you to turn the thing over in your mind, Peter," said Mr. Hardcastle.

"Yes, I will," said Peter, with a little cough:

The next morning Mr. Hardcastle attired himself in his best suit and went to the cottage:

Mrs. Lawson received him with a charming manner.

Mr. Hardcastle wasted no time in useless preliminary chit-chat.

"Mrs. Lawson," he began, a little nervously, "I have concluded to change my condition."

"Indeed!" said the widow, smiling, like an opening rose. "I am so glad to hear it."

"And I am here this morning to ask you to be my wife!" pursued our hero boldly.

"You are kind, sir," said Mrs. Lawson, blushing, and looking prettier than ever, "but I—I really couldn't."

"And why not?" demanded Mr. Hardcastle, fairly taken aback by this unexpected answer:

"I am engaged!" owned up the charming widow, playing with the ribbons at her belt:

"Might I dare to ask—that is——"

"Oh, certainly. It's Peter Horn."

Mr. Hardcastle stammered out a sentence or two of congratulation, and took his leave:

And when the spring wheat reared its green tassels on the hillside Peter married the pretty young widow, and Mr. Hardcastle is single yet. He always felt as if he had been ill-treated, but he never could tell exactly how.

True Detective Stories. ❖ ❖

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ By M. F. GORON.

(Late Chief of the Paris Detective Police.)

Edited by ALBERT KEYZER. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

These thrilling stories relate true incidents in the career of M. Goron—in fact, they are actual extracts from the pages of the diary which he kept while engaged in the duties of his profession. M. Goron has taken the very keenest interest in preparing the stories for press. They now, for the first time, appear in print. Each story is complete in itself.

V.—Number 94.

THE Belgian Government had demanded the extradition of the swindler Karstens, and, for purposes of identification, I had asked the people who had dealings with him to come to my office.

Among those who called upon me was Charles Vernet, a financier, and, whilst I listened to the evidence he gave in a clear, concise manner, the conviction stole upon me that I had met him before under different circumstances. But where—when?

"Where have I seen him, and who is he?" I asked myself after he had gone.

"Who is he?" I inquired the next day of the Police Commissary in M. Charles Vernet's district.

"Who is he?" repeated my friend, with a touch of surprise in his voice: "My dear Goron, don't you really know Charles Vernet?"

"Well, yes, of course, I understand he is a financier, with plenty of money; but I know nothing about him."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here, Goron, I never know when you are making fun of anybody; but if you put the question to me seriously, let me tell you that Charles Vernet is not only rich, but bears a good reputation on the Bourse, and is received everywhere."

"How long has he been in Paris?"

"About ten years. He came here with a large fortune made at the Cape, and has doubled it since."

"Who is he?" I again asked myself when I went to bed.

For days and days the man's face seemed to follow me. With a great mental effort I passed in review the various people I had met in the course of my career, without being able to—what the Americans call—locate him. Yet I felt certain I had seen him when his name was not Charles Vernet.

I took out my journal, looking over the cases with which I had been connected since I became Chief of the Detective Police. And still no trace of him.

I worked my way back to the days when I was assistant to M. Clement, at the Préfecture, and Police Commissary in the Pantin quarter, until I came upon the murder of Moulin, the notary's clerk, by a fellow called Simon. And then I paused; for it suddenly dawned upon me that Simon was the man I must have had in my mind when I saw Charles Vernet.

Moulin lived in the Rue des Abbesses, and he and Simon were friends. One night a lodger, occupying a room below Moulin's, was awakened by the noise of a scuffle overhead, and, going to the rescue, met a man hurrying past him. Moulin was lying on his bed stabbed to the heart. When Simon was arrested the next day, the lodger recognised him as the man he had seen on the stairs. Simon, who had already been implicated in several unpleasant affairs, never admitted his guilt; and, in the absence of direct proofs, the jury brought in a verdict by which he escaped the guillotine, but was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude.

I inquired at the Préfecture, where I learnt that Simon and a man called Aymard had planned to escape from Cayenne. Aymard had succeeded in getting away, whilst Simon, his face battered in and his body covered with wounds, was found in a ditch. His identity had been disclosed by his jacket, which bore the number 94.

The report of Simon's death did not remove my doubts. But, as in the face of the official statement I could not well apply to the authorities for assistance, I determined to proceed in a cautious manner, and try to solve the problem.

If my theory were right that Charles Vernet and Simon were the same person, it must have been Simon who placed the tell-tale jacket with the number 94 on the body of Aymard, whom, no doubt, he had murdered to insure his own safety. This trick had been performed several times, and, from my recollection of Simon, he was not the man to shrink from killing his companion.

I took all the papers relating to the Simon case with me, and gathered from them an interesting fact. Whilst under remand, Simon—probably to curry favour with the authorities—had denounced a youth named Berger, as having been concerned in a burglary in the Rue des Saints-Pères, in connection with which three men had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Berger was arrested, but, as it was proved that he had thus far borne an excellent character, and had been fooled by his companions, he got off very lightly.

As I had reason to suppose, Berger, knowing it was Simon who had betrayed him, would not be sorry to get even with his enemy, and I therefore decided to have a talk with him, without, of course, letting him know more than was strictly necessary. In fact, I had to be very careful how I went to work.

So far, everything was only supposition. The official report about Simon's death might have been true, and my theory about the likeness between the two men—the Boursier and the convict—altogether wrong. In that case a mistake would have proved disastrous.

Twelve years had elapsed since the trial of Simon, and it was possible that Berger had by this time disappeared. The difficulty was to hunt him up. Fortunately I had a clue. Berger, at the time of his arrest, was courting a lady who kept a tobacco shop in the Latin quarter, the widow

of a man called Samson; for which reason the students had christened her Delilah.

When I called at the little shop in the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, I found it had changed hands; and, in the place of the buxom Madame Delilah, I saw a thin, good-natured-looking little woman, fond of gossip. I bought some cigarettes, and she was soon giving me the biography of every member of her family. Then I deflected our talk to Madame Delilah, whereupon the lady-tobacconist looked severe.

"Did you know that person?" she asked.

"No, no," I hurriedly replied. "I have only seen her once or twice, when she was engaged to a man—a man—I can't remember his name."

The lady-tobacconist continued to look severe; and, with scorn in her voice, remarked:

"Engaged, engaged—who do you think would have engaged himself to Delilah?"

"I fancy I heard she was going to marry somebody called Burger or Berger?"

"Berger, you mean. That gaolbird?"

"Yes. What has become of him?"

"When he was discharged from prison he took up photography, and emigrated to Belleville; but that's several years ago."

In Belleville, the populous quarter, there are several establishments where the Paris workmen celebrate their weddings, and, according to custom, have themselves photographed on the important day. The restaurant of the Lac Saint-Fargeau, at the top of the steep Rue de Belleville, is the most famous place for this kind of entertainment; and I decided to go there first. When I reached the establishment, at two in the afternoon, several wedding-parties had taken possession of the garden, and a photographer was busy with his apparatus, whilst his assistant arranged the groups.

"What is the name of the artist?" I inquired of the proprietor.

"Masson," he replied.

At that moment the assistant passed us to fetch a chair from the house. I stopped him, and asked whether he knew a photographer named Berger.

He eyed me curiously.

"My name is Berger."

I had reason to congratulate myself on my luck. And, looking at the man, I detected a likeness to his portrait I had seen at the Préfecture.

I waited till the rush of work was over, and then beckoned to him. When I told him who I was he frowned.

"M. Goron," he exclaimed, "I hoped this horrible affair was forgotten; I am earning my living honestly. Why am I again to be troubled?"

"You have nothing to fear, my good fellow. Your affair, as you call it, is dead and buried. All I ask you is to call on me, to-morrow morning, at half-past ten. I have a question to put to you."

"All right, sir," he sighed.

On my return to the office I sent a note to Charles Vernet, with the request to come to me the next morning at eleven, as I wanted some more information from him regarding the Belgian swindler.

At half-past ten punctually Berger was announced.

"Berger," I began, "you need not look so miserable. I give you my word nobody will hurt you."

He smiled faintly.

"I want you to go into the adjoining room and wait for me."

A few minutes past eleven Vernet was introduced. I apologised for troubling him again, and handed him a few documents relative to the Karstens affair. Whilst he was reading them I went to Berger.

The small room where I had left him, and to which nobody had access, opened into my office. In the door was a little hole.

"You see that hole?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Put your eye to it, and look carefully at the gentleman inside. When he is gone I shall call you."

My conversation with Charles Vernet did not last many minutes; and the moment he had left I fetched Berger.

He stared at me like one in a dream.

"Well, Berger?"

He remained silent for a while, and then shook his head.

"Who is he?" he said at last.

"That is the very question I wanted to put to you."

He sat, deep in thought, one hand playing with his hat, turning it mechanically round.

"Who is he, and why did you show him to me?" he asked again.

I remained silent.

"M. Goron," he cried excitedly, "you have awakened in me a feeling I had managed to smother. You know my history. You know how I was dragged into the affair; and you know the name of the villain who brought the trouble on my head. When I was discharged from Gaillon I had but one idea;

to be avenged on Simon. And when I heard his body had been found in Cayenne, I thought he still might have escaped—he is so artful. Then I looked at every man in the streets, and fancied I saw Simon. At last it became such an obsession that I felt I was growing mad under the strain, and I fought hard against it, until Simon's face ceased to haunt me. And, now, to-day, this feeling has returned in all its intensity. Why?"

"Yes—why?"

"It is the sight of the man that did it. He is not Simon. He looks quite different. Yet, something in his manner, in the way he holds himself, reminds me of him. Who is he?"

"That is none of your business. Now, go home and think no more about it. I will give you an introduction to one of my friends who can put a lot of work in your way."

Berger's face brightened.

"Thank you, M. Goron; you don't know the struggle I am having."

"You will get on better now. Here is my card. And, remember, not a word about this interview."

Berger had strengthened my suspicions; and the moment had arrived for the decisive trial. I had a difficult part to play; but I felt equal to it.

Charles Vernet entertained frequently in his tastefully-furnished apartment in the Rue de la Faisanderie. He also went much into society, and was a constant guest at the house of Madame S——, the well-known lady sculptor, at whose receptions the *élite* of the artistic and literary world congregated.

Madame S——, a charming hostess, and one of the most fascinating of women, had often invited me to these gatherings, but I never found the time to attend them. Now, however, I made up my mind to go to the *soirée* she was giving at the end of the month; and I called on my friend, Camille L——, who, I knew, helped the lady sculptor to organise her evening parties.

"Camille," I said, "I want you to ask me to luncheon with Madame S——, and also to secure me an invitation to her reception on the 28th."

"Nothing easier," said Camille.

Two days later I received an invitation to luncheon with him and Madame S——, at Durand's. When coffee was served Camille turned the conversation to the *soirée*.

"I suppose," he said, "you will, as usual, have an 'All Paris' audience, including the financial swells?"

"Oh, the financial swells," laughed Madame S——, "are always eager to meet celebrities."

And she mentioned the names of her guests. Charles Vernet was among them.

"Why don't you invite our friend here?" asked Camille.

"What is the good?" pouted the lady. "He never comes."

"Try him again."

"Very well. M. Goron, will you give me the pleasure of your company?"

"It will be an honour to me, madame."

Madame S—— clapped her hands with joy.

"I am much obliged to you, M. Goron. And I want you to contribute your share to the night's entertainment. Cannot you tell us something interesting?"

"A lecture?"

"Why not? That would be splendid."

"I doubt whether it would amuse your guests; but possibly I may find something else to suit their jaded palates. And, if it is not indiscreet on my part, will you allow me to bring my young nephew? He is here on a visit."

"By all means; I shall be delighted."

The eventful evening arrived, and I drove up to Madame S——'s with a parcel, carefully wrapped in brown paper, which I left downstairs in charge of one of the servants. As to my nephew, nobody would have guessed that the good-looking, well-dressed young man, with the gardenia in his button-hole, was a smart detective in whom I placed absolute reliance.

When I entered the *salons* the guests had nearly all arrived. I recognised Paileron, Lucien Marc, of the *Illustration*, Alphonse Daudet, Meissonier, Puvis de Chavannes, Lamoureux, Fracisque Sarcey, Benjamin Constant, Sardou; actors and actresses from the leading theatres; famous scientists—a brilliant crowd.

There was some excellent music, and then a long-haired gentleman unfolded the mysteries of the cinematograph—at that time quite a novelty. A professor from the Sorbonne showed us a new electrometer; and a Sociétaire from the Comédie-Française gave some recitations.

I was sitting in a quiet corner, watching Charles Vernet deep in conversation with three or four Stock Exchange men, when Madame came towards me, both hands extended.

"Dear M. Goron," she cried, "it is now your turn."

And, taking my arm, she led me to the centre of the room. My friend Camille asked for silence for the hostess, who said: "Monsieur Goron, whom we are all glad to welcome here, has promised to give us some of his experiences. It is a surprise I kept in store for you."

Loud applause followed:

"Ladies and gentlemen," I began, when silence was restored, "our charming hostess has told you I would relate some of my experiences. I have no such intention; for the simple reason that you all know more about them than I do myself. Newspaper reporting has become one of the fine arts; and no sooner is a crime committed than the papers publish the fullest details. Nay, the up-to-date journalist seems even to have the gift of prophecy; for many a time I read of burglaries and attempted murders that have not occurred yet. I, therefore, thought that instead of giving you narratives offering but little interest, I would draw your attention to the curious evolution which the detective's profession, like everything nowadays, has undergone.

"Years ago, the man whose duty it is to fight the enemies of society had his own powers to rely upon. Between him and the criminal it was skill against skill, art against art. Then came the modern inventions: railways, steamers, the telegraph, the telephone; and matters grew worse for the detective. Alas! it was the murderers, the forgers, who had the advantage, inasmuch as they could steal a long march upon Nemesis, and get their accomplices to use the telegraph and the telephone for their benefit.

"The question, therefore, was to discover a system by which society, and not its foe, would reap the advantage. Ladies and gentlemen, this system has been found, and the man to whom we owe it, and whose name will go down to posterity, is M. Bertillon."

I undid the parcel which my "nephew," at my request, had brought upstairs.

"This box," I continued, "contains the instruments used in the anthropometrical department for the identification of those who, having previously fallen into the hands of the police, expect to escape detection by changing their names, or altering, as they think, their appearance."

Having explained to the company the practical working of the system, and how

the little instruments are applied to the head and fingers, I said :

"With your kind permission, I will now conclude with a practical demonstration, which will leave to some of you a little souvenir of my lecture. As I had already the honour to explain, the measurements of the incriminated person are put down on a card, to which his photograph is affixed, and thus we possess the infallible means of discovering, at a moment's notice, the identity of the person arrested. It is a net through whose meshes nothing can slip. I have brought some of these cards with me, and shall be happy to take the measurement of any lady or gentlemen, and present them with their card."

I never saw such excitement. Dozens of charming women made a rush for me.

After I had attended to a number of them, my "nephew" filling up the cards, I raised my hand.

"And now the gentlemen !"

Sarcey was the first to present himself. Then came Daudet, and other distinguished personages.

All along I had kept my eye on Charles Vernet, who had remained in the background, and now moved towards the door.

"M. Vernet," I said, "don't go away: Have your measurement taken."

He hesitated a moment, and then said, with what appeared to me a forced smile :

"No, thank you, I have seen the thing done before."

"Well, I have set my mind upon measuring you. Ladies," I cried to a couple of American girls, who had been among the first to be operated upon, "please bring this gentleman to me."

Amidst shouts of laughter they seized him and pulled him towards the table.

This time he scowled.

"Is this meant for a joke ?" he asked.

"Of course. It is part of the fun."

Either my suspicions were unfounded, or the man had marvelous self-possession: He never moved a muscle whilst he submitted to the operation.

Others were now pressing forward, but, on the pretext that I had no more cards, I withdrew to the smoking-room, whither Vernet had gone, followed by my attendant: The latter had given Vernet a prepared card, and had quickly slipped into my hand the one he had just filled up ; whereupon I went into a corner to compare it with the

official document relative to Simon, which I had borrowed from M. Bertillon's office.

A glance was sufficient. The figures were identical. It was not Vernet, but Simon, the escaped convict, the murderer, who stood there, lighting his cigar, making an appointment with a friend to meet him the next day. The next day ! And in five minutes the thunderbolt would have fallen on his head. I went up to him.

"M. Vernet ! Don't make a scene. Say good-bye to the hostess, and tell her you will have to leave Paris to-morrow on a long journey. You will be telling the truth."

He did not move, and looked me straight in the face.

"For the second and last time," I whispered, "I advise you not to make a scene. It is not to Charles Vernet I am speaking, it is to Simon, the escaped convict, to Number 94, and, probably to the assassin of Aymard. My 'nephew' over yonder is a detective, and I have three more 'nephews' downstairs in case of emergency. Follow me quietly."

He thought a moment. And then :

"I will go with you ; but you are making a mistake you will regret."

On the way to the Préfecture my prisoner suddenly said :

"All this means nothing. You will have to prove——"

"That you are Simon ? It is already proved, even by the superficial manner in which I measured you. But this is not my department. M. Bertillon will now take you in hand. My mission is finished."

At the Préfecture they were astounded: My prisoner made a plucky stand, and fought desperately against the overwhelming odds ; but, finally, like all the other criminals I have seen, he broke down before the pitiless Bertillon system.

Yes, he was Simon ; but as, according to law, he had to be tried in Cayenne for having escaped, and on suspicion of having murdered Aymard, he was, at once, conveyed to the Ile de Ré to be sent out to the penal settlement. The whole thing was done so promptly and quietly that it was some time before the man's friends heard of what had befallen him.

But, despite my warning, the officials at the Ile de Ré prison did not keep a careful watch on Simon, for the day before he was to have been put on board the steamer he managed to strangle himself.

(Next month : "*The Lightning Flash*.")

The Conventional Ending. ❖

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ By A. DEMAIN GRANGE.

At the request of a number of readers I am publishing a story of which the ending is omitted, and I shall be glad to pay £1 ls. (one guinea) to the sender of what I consider the best ending, irrespective of its similarity to that which the author himself has written. The ending must not consist of more than two hundred words. Manuscripts should be sent to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in envelopes marked "Ending," to arrive not later than May 18th. The winner's ending, together with that of the author, will be published in the July number of THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.

ACT THE FIRST.

"OH, Jack!"

The exclamation came short and sharp, like the snapping of a violin string. A look of dumb misery crept into the girl's brown eyes as they sought the blue ones of the man sitting opposite to her. Such a look as only one man can bring into a woman's eyes, and then only in one way.

"Is this to be the end?" she asked, after a pause.

The blue eyes shifted uneasily: "It must be," he faltered:

There was a prolonged silence. The fire burnt up cheerily, casting long, dancing shadows across the cheaply-furnished room. The white metal tray and the common china tea-service on the small, round table between them stood out bravely against the dark background of the dining-table cloth.

The two profiles, one firm and clear-cut, the other soft and rounded, were thrown into strong relief by the firelight. All else was heavy, undefined shadow, deepening into the black homogeneity beyond. This was the setting for the first act of the drama.

And the story?

So far that had been simple enough: A pretty face and a man's daring glance, and the Garden of Eden had opened wide its gates for Jack Ralston and Queenie Neville. They had entered gladly, lingered awhile in its pleasant places, and forgotten the passing of the hours, and some other things, in its languorous shade. He was the son of an outside stockbroker, earning a moderate allowance in his father's office. She was a chorus girl in the latest musical frivolity at a small West End theatre.

It was a poor garden, and the paths were ill-kept, but it was Eden all the same:

And now——

The boy and the girl, for they were little more, stared fixedly into the red heart of the fire. They had come to the parting of the ways; and both knew it. The hour of dalliance was over, and for the man there was the world's work to be done. In a more primitive age, perhaps, they might have mated, and the man would have worked for her afterwards; but as life is constituted in this present year of grace, such a simple procedure would be considered impolitic, if not impossible. The man realised that; the girl had felt it all along:

"Yes," she said slowly, "I suppose it is better so."

He turned to her quickly: "Don't think me a brute, girlie. I hate giving you up—going away like this, you know. It is rotten. But what am I to do?" He looked frowningly into the fire.

"I know," she said gently, leaning across the table and laying her hand on his sleeve: "You've got to do things—to make your way in the world, Jack. I understand that: You can't sit here, spooning with me, and let the chances slip by you: There's a big place waiting for you somewhere, and you must go and fill it. That's only right, and as it should be: I've had my turn, and—and you've been very good to me, Jack, boy." Her voice lingered tenderly, caressingly, on the last words.

Jack looked miserable, as a man usually does when a woman talks to him like that.

"Oh, girlie!" he cried. "You mustn't,

you mustn't! I've not been good to you—no, I haven't. But I wouldn't have left you like this, if the gov'nor hadn't cut up rough, and told me in so many words to clear out."

"He has told you that?" she gasped.

"He has indeed. He said he couldn't do with a fellow who—" He paused abruptly.

"Who wastes his time with a girl like me?" she finished for him.

"Well—yes—that's what it came to," he admitted. "But don't think," he added hastily, "that I'm regretting anything—wanting to go back on my word, you know. I'd have stuck to you right through if I'd had the money. I'll stick to you yet if you like."

The girl rose to her feet quickly:

"No," she said, "no, you can't do that, Jack. You must go to your father and tell him you've broken off with me. Tell him you won't see me any more, and you'll try to forget me, and—and I'll try to forget, too. That'll put things right."

"It won't," he said gloomily.

"No?"

"He won't forget, and he won't forgive what's past. He's got peculiar views, you know, about—about things."

"Yes," she answered absently.

She was wondering if after all Mr. Samuel Ralston's views were peculiar. She decided they were not, they couldn't be, or why should everyone speak so highly of him as they did? She didn't know that Nature herself is regarded as being a little peculiar in these progressive days.

"Then," she said firmly, "our duty is clear before us. You've got to do the best you can for yourself, and I must help you. It is hard"—the firmness came perilously near to weakness—"for both of us. But I am sure it is the right thing, and we must go through with it, Jack. There is no other way."

"I'm afraid not," he said reluctantly.

"No other way," she repeated, as if to assure herself of the fact.

The assurance came slowly, and it wasn't very convincing when it did come. She resumed her seat with a fluttering little sigh.

They talked on for a while, and then fell into silence. There was so much to think about, and so little that could be said. Spoken words don't count for much in a case like this; it's the silences that tell.

The coals in the grate subsided with a

gentle crash. The boy rose and held out his hand.

"Well, then—it had better be now," he stammered.

"Yes," she said, rising and taking his hand. "It had better be now, Jack. The best of luck, old boy, and—happiness." The brown eyes smiled bravely into the eyes of blue.

"Thanks, girly," he whispered hoarsely: "God bless you. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Jack."

Their hands clung for a moment longer, and then parted. He went out, closing the door softly behind him. The smile still hung about her lips as she watched him go. When he passed into the dim, ill-lighted streets she was kneeling before the fire, her face buried in her hands, sobbing bitterly.

The first act was over.

ACT THE SECOND.

SOMEONE has said that man is a creature of his environment. That is true enough, and the assertion holds still more in the case of woman.

But it did not require the aid of delicate blue and white decorations and soft, rose-tinted lamp-shades to make Queenie Neville what she was, the loveliest woman in New York City or out of it. That was the thought in the mind of Mr. Silas B. Hummum, as he entered the dainty room at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel reserved for his new leading lady. Mr. Hummum, it may be mentioned, was a prominent theatre-manager, and consequently an authority on such matters.

Things had gone well with Queenie Neville during the past five years. So well that her friends couldn't believe it, and her enemies didn't. The obscure little chorus girl had suddenly blossomed forth into a public favourite, and taken the great heart of London by storm. Her photograph, large-sized and small, and the inevitable paragraphs, chiefly large-sized, appeared regularly in all the illustrated newspapers, and her name became a household word throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Dukes' sons, cooks' sons, sons of belted earls, and even the earls themselves, besieged her with offers of marriage; or where that, for obvious reasons, was impossible, with what they considered the equivalent. These she declined, regretfully or coldly as the case required, and steadfastly pursued her way. From one management she passed to another, until in due course

she reached America, where, after a round of triumphs that left the New York reporters adjectiveless, she had attracted the attention of the great Mr. Hummum himself, and achieved the distinction of being chosen by him to create the leading part in a new play which he intended to produce shortly at the Yorick Theatre. She held the manuscript of this play in her hand as she rose to greet the theatrical magnate.

"Well," he said, with a half-whimsical smile, after they had shaken hands, "how do you like it now—hey?"

"Oh, I like it as much as ever!" she replied warmly. "It is a great play, magnificently conceived and beautifully written. But I still think the unconventional ending spoils it."

"Hum," said Mr. Hummum: "You would prefer a more conventional *dénouement*?"

"I think the public would prefer it," she answered quietly.

The master of mimes stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"Possibly, possibly," he admitted. "But then, consider the artistic loss to the play. The situation is a strong one. The man returns to find the poor, homely girl he had known in his struggling days transformed into a rich and beautiful woman, with the world at her feet. They meet, and she receives him kindly. But the years have made a difference, and he cannot ask now for what he once threw away. So they part."

"Yes—so they part," she murmured.

"And the play ends. That is what I call a strong finish. You would alter it—hey?"

"Yes," she said, "I would alter it."

"How?"

"I would make them marry, of course, and live happy ever afterwards," she answered, smiling.

"My dear Miss Neville!" Hummum exclaimed. "Surely that would be too commonplace for these enlightened days—too lacking in originality?"

"You forget this is a play," she replied, with something of bitterness in her voice. "Things *must* come right in the end—in plays."

"Yes, yes," he conceded. "But this is an infernally fine play, and it deserves to be treated as such, not hacked and mutilated to satisfy the tastes of a mawkish-minded public." He spoke warmly, as men of his stamp are wont to do in moments

of enthusiasm. The last piece at the Yorick had ended conventionally, and it had been a failure. "Besides," he added, "I don't think the author would like it."

"The author!" she said, dreamily turning over the manuscript. "He is a new man, isn't he?"

The great manager coughed behind his hand. He won't be a new man long," he remarked.

"But now——" She smiled and glanced at the typewritten page.

Hummum shrugged his shoulders. "That is his affair—and mine," he said shrewdly.

"Oh, all right!" the girl laughed. "I don't want to pry into your business secrets. They have no interest for me—outside my own contract. It is only fair that you should make a bargain where you can. I'm afraid you didn't find it quite so easy with me," she concluded archly.

"I consider that you are the best bargain I have ever made, Miss Neville," Hummum said gallantly.

"I shall remember that, Mr. Hummum." The brown eyes glanced up at him roguishly. Mr. Hummum smiled complacently. "But, business aside, I want to know about the man himself. Tell me—who and what is he?"

"He is an unknown quantity," replied Mr. Hummum.

"Don't be horrid! You know very well what I mean. What is he like, where does he live, and what does he do?"

"My dear lady, really, I cannot tell you! *The Garden of Eden* was sent through the post to my London office, and forwarded to me here. I read it through twice, liked it, and promptly wired my acceptance. The terms, and so forth, were arranged by my business manager in England. I have never seen the author."

"Oh! But you have heard something about him?"

"A little, but not much. It seems that he lives in Australia, and had to return there on business shortly after I accepted his play. In fact, the negotiations had to be hurried through to allow of his departure. He will arrive in New York in time for its production."

"Won't he attend any of the rehearsals?"

"None—not even the dress. He prefers to leave the matter entirely in my hands—and yours. By the way, he particularly mentioned you as the most suitable person to create the *rôle* of Lucy Desmond."

"Did he?" said the girl carelessly.

"There is one other item of information I am possessed of that might interest you: His real name isn't Wilson Abbot."

"Oh, what a pity!" she exclaimed: "I liked it so much."

"Lots in a name," said Mr. Hummum drily. "The other is a shade less poetical. It is simply Jack Ralston."

"Jack——"

The girl sprang to her feet, white and trembling. The lace over her bosom rose and fell painfully. Mr. Hummum eyed her apprehensively.

"Well, my dear," he said soothingly, "what has that got to do with it? I won't let him worry you."

She laughed rather hysterically.

"Oh, he won't do that—he won't worry me," she said.

Mr. Hummum looked relieved.

"Good!" he cried. "I'm glad to hear it, very glad indeed. I was afraid that perhaps—er—your position renders you liable to these—hum—to persecutions of an amatory nature——"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of that!" she interrupted hastily. "Mr. Ralston is an old friend of mine—nothing more."

"Quite so. Naturally, you were a little surprised—startled, hey?"

"Naturally."

"Yes, yes, of course. Quite a situation, ha, ha! But you're—er—you're all right now?" This a trifle anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I'm all right now," she replied, smiling faintly.

"And you'll play the part as it stands?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

Mr. Hummum blew his nose thankfully. Then, like the wise man he was, he did not press the point any further, but diplomatically took his leave. In this he acted intuitively. Much traffic in things theatrical had taught him that a woman rarely means what she says five minutes after she has said it.

When he was gone, Queenie went to a small escritoire, and unlocking it, drew forth a faded photograph at which she looked earnestly. And as she looked a mist rose before her eyes.

That is how Jack Ralston came to be in the Second Act.

ACT THE THIRD.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN had been a great success; and, up to a certain point, Queenie Neville had been an even greater success. It was just before the final curtain that she broke down unaccountably.

Unaccountably, that is, from the point of view of the audience. The truth of it was she could not get over the unconventional ending. She felt it was too sacred a thing—too like real life to be travestied on the stage. At least, that is what she told herself, and no doubt she firmly believed that it was so. Possibly the presence of Jack Ralston in the stage box, surrounded by his friends, had something to do with her nervousness; or it may have been the pale-faced critic sitting in the stalls. The fact remains that she failed miserably.

"I told you it wouldn't go," she said peevishly to Mr. Hummum, as they stood in the wings after the curtain had fallen.

"Rubbish, my dear," said the great manager genially. "It went capitally. All except that last scene, where I admit you were a bit rocky. But I don't suppose it matters. In fact, I think it was rather a good thing than otherwise."

"How could it be good?" she demanded impatiently.

Mr. Hummum winked mirthlessly at an unconscious scene-shifter.

"A pretty touch of real sentiment," he murmured, "always goes down with the public. Especially if there's a rumour—only a rumour, mind you—to give it colour."

The girl's eyes blazed.

"It's preposterous!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"Of course it is, my dear," he answered in his soothing manner, "quite preposterous. But they seem to like it. Hark at that!"

He linked his arm in hers, and the next moment she found herself bowing her acknowledgments to the blurred mass of faces beyond the footlights. She was conscious that the man she had been watching all night had left the stage-box, which was now empty. In some inexplicable manner, she found him standing at her side. The house roared and clapped its myriad hands approvingly.

[How does the story end? Do Jack and Queenie make it up—or what happens? Try for the guinea prize offered in the introduction to the story.—Ed. NOVEL.]

Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction.

There is so much that is good in the fiction of other countries that everyone should have an opportunity of seeing specimens of the work of, at any rate, the greatest writers in various languages. This feature endeavours to cover every nationality. The stories included in it are translated so skilfully that little of their original atmosphere is lost.

THE DAUGHTER OF PONTIUS PILATE.

By IVAN VAZOFF. (From the Bulgarian. Translated by J. Almar.)

Ivan Vazoff is practically the founder of Bulgarian literature, and up to the present is the only great writer in that language. In the revolution of 1876 the soldiers went to battle singing his war songs, and other powerful poems from his pen helped to raise the enthusiasm of his countrymen.

AT this time Claudius Rixus, Governor of Damascus, was in sore trouble. His beautiful wife, Poppæa, daughter of Pontius Pilate, who ruled Jerusalem in the name of Cæsar, was afflicted by a terrible illness—paralysis. Her beautiful limbs were slowly withering, her graceful form was losing all its suppleness and flexibility, and she could only admire the beautiful gardens, that incircled the town like a garland, from a litter covered with silks and velvet.

Two years had passed since this terrible calamity had fallen on her; and there was no hope of a cure for her malady. In vain her husband had brought physicians, wonder-workers, and men of science from far countries, in the hope that their arts might restore her to health. Their knowledge, their efforts, their care, their experience were futile against the pertinacious malady that had stricken the lovely Roman.

At length there came a pilgrim from Jerusalem, who brought the news that a wonderful wizard had appeared in the land of Judah, called Jesus of Nazareth. He worked wonders amongst the sick, he cured those smitten with paralysis, restoring them to all their former health and strength, he made the blind to see, and even restored the dead to life.

These tidings gave great pleasure to Poppæa, and she said:

"I will go to him; I will go to this wizard.

I will pay him liberally with precious stones; I will give him my costly green diamond necklace, which is worth more than five Judean towns; only let him cure me."

But the pilgrim replied:

"Most lovely Poppæa: All this will not help you, the Nazarene goes about barefoot and in rags; he keeps company only with the poor, and disdains all the vanities of this world; you will not thus win his favour."

"Then what must I do to make him cure me?"

"From those who come to him seeking to be restored to health, he asks only that they shall believe on him."

Poppæa marvelled on hearing this, then having rubbed her forehead with her white hand, on which flashed a precious jewel, she asked again:

"To believe in him—how?"

"To believe that he is the Son of God."

"The Son of God? I cannot understand this." And for a long time she questioned the pilgrim.

Poppæa spent many days and nights in meditation. She looked on her limbs, all cramped in the prime of life, and burst into floods of tears. But ever clearer and clearer to her soul appeared the mysterious figure of the unknown wizard, who ordered that he should be called the Son of God, and who was able to work wonders far beyond the reach of human understanding. And as the

yearning for the health and strength of her youth became stronger and stronger, there awoke in her heart the desire to see this wonderful man; she was even ready to believe in his divinity.

"If he is so far above men in strength and spirit, he must be almost divine; only the gods are so powerful that they can with one look, one thought, heal men grievously afflicted. Our gods did not wish to help me—let me try the power of that God, of Whom the Nazarene claims to be the son." And faith began to awake in her soul.

So Poppæa decided to go to Jerusalem, the place where she was told it was most easy to meet with Jesus.

Knowing, however, that her husband, a high-born Roman, and proud of his birth, would never consent to her stooping so low as to intreat anything of a Jewish sorcerer, worthy of contempt, she told Claudius she wished to visit her father.

This fancy, the gratification of which, in the case of a person so ill as Poppæa, was a difficult and troublesome matter, startled Claudius. But she intreated so earnestly, and insisted so firmly, that he was obliged to yield to the wishes of his sick wife whom he loved so fondly. She was placed in a carriage richly upholstered with soft hair and silk, and he sent her to the Land of Judah in the company of his most trusted servants.

After three days' journey along a road that wound down the east slopes of the mountains of Lebanon, and was covered with cedars, Poppæa reached Judea, and on the fourth day, about mid-day, she arrived at Jerusalem.

It was just before the Jewish Passover.

On the way to the north gate of the town she saw crowds of people approaching, and a detachment of Roman cavalry. The crowd advanced towards the west, to a naked hill near by.

Poppæa gazed on the passing crowd, unable to guess its purpose. Just before the town gate, however, she met the Roman centurion who, with his soldiers, was following the people, and ordering her attendants to stop, she asked whither the crowd was proceeding.

"On yonder hill, Jesus of Nazareth, disturber of the public peace, who has been condemned to death, is to be stretched on the cross," he replied, bowing low to the distinguished daughter of Pilate.

"That must not be—No!" exclaimed the terrified Poppæa: "Let them not carry out this sentence, I intreat!"

But the officer replied that none but Pilate could change his order, and that before such a change could be effected, the guilty one already would have been put to death.

He was astonished to see Poppæa showing sympathy and sorrow for an agitator, condemned to death by the Jews themselves.

Agitated and in despair, Poppæa turned her eyes towards Golgotha, where the dreadful thing was to take place.

"Carry me there quickly. He ought not to die!" she cried to her attendants: Quickly a litter was brought, for it was impossible for the carriage to ascend the hill, that was covered with stones.

But the summit of the hill reached, Poppæa saw with terror three crosses, and on each was stretched a man. The fate of the Nazarene was already accomplished!

By Poppæa's orders, the screaming, scoffing crowds around the crosses were dispersed, and her litter was placed near it. Beneath the centre cross knelt a Jewish woman, bending low; near her were two others in tears, wringing their hands in sorrow, and gazing on the martyr, from whose wounded hands and feet flowed a red stream of blood.

Full of anger, but silent and motionless, Poppæa fixed her eyes on the suffering face of Christ, Whose meek features showed the terrible suffering He was enduring.

Her face bathed with tears, she gazed with the other women upon the Christ. Poor Poppæa tried to catch His eye, which, despite the terrible, indescribable bodily suffering He was enduring, shone across the clouds of ineffable pain like a ray of sweetness and gentleness. But the eyes of Christ were fixed upon His weeping mother, and never once turned towards Poppæa.

"Save me!" she whispered, without turning her eyes from the face of Christ.

Suddenly Christ's meek gaze was turned from His mother to the Roman matron. The eyes of Christ and the Roman met: He gazed on her awhile, so meekly, so sorrowfully, so intensely. . . . And under the influence of that look, which pierced her like a ray of heavenly light, she felt a strange, deep thrill through her being, and something new, sweet, and good filled her soul and body.

* * * * *

At the top of the marble stairs that led to his palace, Pilate awaited the arrival of his sick daughter. He had been informed

beforehand of her coming, and he was amazed and full of fear, unable to understand the object of her journey.

Seeing her approach in the carriage, her face full of grief, he stretched out his arms, that he might press her to his breast when she was carried up to him.

But the astonished Pilate beheld Poppæa light from the carriage without assistance.

With a movement of her hand, she dismissed the servants who approached her with a gilded litter; alone she ascended the marble stairs, with a step light as that of a gazelle of Lebanon:

Weeping bitterly, she threw her arms round the neck of her father, who was speechless with amazement, and cried:

"Father, to-day you have slain God!"

MASTER CORNILLE'S SECRET.

By ALPHONSE DAUDET. (From the French. Translated by G. B. Ives.)

Alphonse Daudet, the eminent French novelist, was born at Nîmes in 1840, and died in 1897. His first book, a volume of poetry, called "*Les Amoureuses*," was followed by a brilliant series of novels, of which some of the best known are "*Jack*," "*Numa Roumestan*," "*Fromont jeune et Risler aîné*," "*Tartarin de Tarascon*," and "*Sapho*."

During the early part of his literary career Daudet devoted himself to writing short stories, the result being his famous "*Lettres de mon Moulin*," "*Lettres à un Absent*," "*Femmes d'Artistes*," and "*Contes du Lundi*." These stories, which Zola described as "little jewels," cost their author an infinity of pains. We are told that he often spent days over a single page, in a terrible hand-to-hand fight with words, and that many of the little masterpieces, slight as they are, cost him weeks of unremitting labour. Some of them are complete novels in miniature, and all bear the imprint of his genius. The following story from "*Lettres de mon Moulin*" (Letters from my Mill) is very representative of the collection, and shows Daudet at his best.

FRANCET MAMAI, an old fifer, who comes sometimes to pass the evening with me and drink mulled wine, told me the other evening of a little village drama which my mill witnessed some twenty years ago. The good man's story impressed me, and I propose to try to tell it to you as I heard it.

Imagine for a moment, dear readers, that you are seated before a jar of perfumed wine, and that it is an old fifer who is speaking.

Our province, my dear monsieur, has not always been a dead place, entirely unknown to fame, as it is to-day. Long ago there was a big business done here in grinding grain, and the people from all the farms within a circuit of ten leagues brought us their grain to grind.

The hills all around the village were covered with windmills. To right and left one could see nothing but the sails turning about in the mistral above the pines, long strings of little donkeys, laden with bags, climbing the hills and stretching out along the roads; and it was pleasant to hear all through the week the cracking of the whips on the hilltops, the creaking of the canvas, and the *Dia hue* of the millers' men:

On Sundays we went to the mills in groups. The millers treated us to muscat. The millers' wives were as lovely as queens, with their lace neckerchiefs and their gold crosses. I used to carry my fife, and we danced farandoles till it was pitch dark. Those mills, you see, were the pleasure and wealth of our province.

Unluckily, some Frenchmen from Paris conceived the idea of setting up a steam flour-mill on the road to Tarascon. Very fine and new it was; the people fell into the habit of sending their grain there, and the poor windmills were left without work.

For some time they tried to keep up the struggle, but steam was the stronger, and one after another, *pecaire*! they were all obliged to close. We saw no more strings of little donkeys. The millers' pretty wives sold their gold crosses. No more muscat! No more farandoles! No matter how hard the mistral might blow, the sails did not move. Then, one fine day, the Commune ordered all those shanties torn down, and vines and olive-trees were planted where they stood.

But, amid all the distraction, one little mill held out and continued to turn bravely on its hill, in despite of the steam-millers. That was Master Cornille's mill, the same

one in which we are passing the evening at this moment:

Master Cornille was an old miller, who had lived sixty years in flour and was crazy over his trade. The setting up of the steam mills made him act like a madman. For a week he ran about the village, collecting people round him and shouting at the top of his lungs that they intended to poison Provence with the flour from the steam-mills.

"Don't go there," he would say; "those villains use steam to make bread, steam which is an invention of the devil, while I work with the mistral and the tramontana, which are the breath of the good Lord." And he would spout a lot of fine words in praise of windmills, but no one listened to them.

Then, in a towering rage, the old man shut himself up in his mill, and lived alone like a wild beast. He wouldn't even keep with him his grand-daughter Vivette, a child of fifteen, who since the death of her parents had no one but her grandfather in the world. The poor child was obliged to earn her living and to hire herself out among the farms for the harvest, the silkworm season, or the olive picking. And yet her grandfather seemed to love the child dearly. He often traveled four leagues on foot in the heat of the sun to see her at the farm where she was working, and when he was with her, he would pass hours at a time gazing at her and weeping.

In the province, people thought that the old miller had been led by avarice to send Vivette away; and it did not do him credit to allow his grandchild to travel about that way from one farm to another, exposed to the brutality of the labourers and to all the trials of young women in service.

People thought it very wrong, too, that a man of Master Cornille's reputation, who up to that time had shown the greatest self-respect, should go about through the streets like a regular gipsy, bare-footed, with a cap all holes and a blouse all in rags.

The fact is that on Sunday, when we saw him come in to mass, we were ashamed for him, we old men; and Cornille felt it so keenly that he didn't dare to come and sit in the warden's pew; he always remained at the back of the church, near the holy-water vessel, with the poor.

There was something in Master Cornille's life we couldn't understand. For a long time no one in the village had carried him any grain, and yet the sails of his windmill

were always in motion as before. In the evening people met the old miller on the roads driving before him his donkey loaded with fat bags of flour.

"Good evening, Master Cornille," the peasants would call out to him; "is business still good?"

"Still good, my children," the old man would reply, with a jovial air. "Thank God, we have no lack of work."

Then, if anyone asked where so much work could come from, he would put a finger to his lips and answer gravely:

"Hush! I am working for exportation."

No one could ever get anything more from him:

As for putting one's nose inside his mill, it wasn't to be thought of. Even little Vivette herself never went in there.

When people passed in front of it, they always found the door closed, the huge sails moving, the old ass browsing on the platform, and a great thin cat taking a sun-bath on the window-sill, and glaring at them with a wicked expression.

All this smelt of mystery, and made people talk a great deal. Everyone had his own explanation of Master Cornille's secret, but the general report was that there were even more bags of silver in the mill than bags of grain.

After a while, however, everything came to light; this is how it happened:

One fine day, as I was playing on my life for the young people to dance, I noticed that my eldest boy and little Vivette had fallen in love with each other.

At heart I was not displeased, because after all the name of Cornille was held in honour among us, and then it would have pleased me to see that pretty little bird of a Vivette trotting about my house. But as our lovers had often had opportunities to be together, I determined, for fear of accidents, to settle the business at once, and I went up to the mill to say a word to the grandfather.

Ah! the old sorcerer! you should have seen how he received me! It was impossible for me to induce him to open his door: I explained my reasons after a fashion, through the keyhole; and all the time I was talking, there was that lean villain of a cat snorting over my head.

The old man didn't give me time to finish, but shouted to me most impolitely to go back to my life; and that if I was in such a hurry to marry my boy, I could go and look for a girl at the steam-mill.

As you can imagine, the blood went to my head when I heard such rough talk; but I was wise enough to restrain myself, and leaving the old fool in his mill, I returned to inform the children of my discomfiture. The poor lambs couldn't believe it; they asked me as a favour to allow them to go up together to the mill and speak to the grandfather. I hadn't the courage to refuse, and off my lovers went.

Just as they reached the mill, Master Cornille had gone out. The door was securely locked; but the old fellow, when he went away, had left his ladder outside, and suddenly it occurred to the children to go in by the window and see what there might be inside that famous mill.

What a strange thing! The main room of the mill was empty. Not a sack, not a particle of grain; not the slightest trace of flour on the walls or on the spider-webs. They couldn't even smell that pleasant, warm odour of ground wheat that makes the air of a mill so fragrant. The shaft was covered with dust, and the huge cat was sleeping on it.

The lower room had the same aspect of poverty and neglect—a wretched bed, a few rags, a crust of bread on one stair, and in a corner three or four bursted sacks with rubbish and plaster sticking out.

That was Master Cornille's secret! It was that plaster that he paraded at night on the roads, to save the honour of the mill and to make people think that he made flour there. Poor mill! Poor Cornille! Long ago the steam-millers had robbed them of their last customer. The sails still turned, but the mill ground nothing.

The children returned to me all in tears and told me what they had seen. It tore my heart to listen to them. Without a moment's loss of time I ran to the neighbours; I told them the story in two words, and we agreed instantly that we must carry to Cornille's mill all the wheat there was in the houses. No sooner said than done. The whole village started off, and we arrived at the top of the hill with a procession of donkeys loaded with grain, and real grain too.

The mill was wide open. In front of the

door Master Cornille sat on a bag of plaster, weeping, with his face in his hands. He had discovered on returning home that during his absence someone had entered his mill and discovered his sad secret.

"Poor me!" he said. "Now there's nothing left for me to do but to die. The mill is dishonoured."

And he sobbed as if his heart would break, calling his mill by all sorts of names, speaking to it as if it were a living person.

At that moment the donkeys arrived on the platform, and we all began to shout as we did in the palmy days of the millers:

"Holla! Mill there! Holla! Master Cornille!"

And the bags were piled up before the door, and the fine red grain strewed the earth in all directions.

Master Cornille stared with all his eyes. He took up some grain in the hollow of his old hand, and said, laughing and weeping at once:

"It is grain! Lord God! Real grain! Leave me; let me look at it."

Then, turning to us:

"Ah! I knew that you'd come back to me. All those steam-millers are thieves."

We proposed to carry him in triumph to the village.

"No, no, my children," he said; "first of all I must give my mill something to eat. Just think! It's so long since he has had anything between his teeth!"

And it brought the tears to the eyes of us all to see the poor old man rush about to right and left, emptying the sacks, looking after the millstone, while the grain was crushed and the fine wheaten dust rose to the ceiling.

I must do our people justice: from that day we never allowed the old miller to lack work. Then one morning Master Cornille died, and the sails of our last mill ceased to turn—this time for ever. When Cornille was dead, no one followed in his footsteps. What can you expect, monsieur? Everything has an end in this world, and we must believe that the day of windmills has passed, like that of barges on the Rhone, *Paria-*ments, and jackets with big flowers.



N.B.—The Editor thinks he knows a really good story when he sees one. This is one of the very best.

The Castlecourt Diamond Case.

By GERALDINE BONNER.

Statement of Sophy Jeffers, Lady's Maid to the Marchioness of Castlecourt.

I HAD been in Lady Castlecourt's service two years when the Castlecourt diamonds were stolen. At the time we were staying in London for the season, where my lord and lady occupied a suite of rooms at Burridge's Hotel.

The evening of the robbery my lady was going to dinner at the Duke of Duxbury's. In the afternoon I got everything ready for her, and put the leather case containing the diamonds on the dressing-table in her bedroom.

I was talking in the sitting-room with Chawlmers (my lord's man) when I thought I heard a rustle of skirts in the bedroom. I went in at once, and seeing nothing opened the door on to the landing, but no one was about.

While I was dressing my lady she took up the leather case, but when she opened it she found the jewels were missing. Chawlmers and myself were suspected by the detectives who were called in of being concerned in the theft.

The next morning we heard of the disappearance of Sara Wight, one of the housemaids on our floor. There was every sign of a hurried flight, and from descriptions Sara Wight was supposed to be a thief well known in America as Laura the Lady. Suspicion then fell on her.

■ ■ ■

Statement of Lily Bingham, known to the police as Laura the Lady, and figuring as a housemaid at Burridge's Hotel under the alias of Sara Wight.

I HAD long had my eye on the Castlecourt diamonds, and knowing that Lord and Lady Castlecourt were staying at Burridge's, I obtained a situation as housemaid of their suite. I had every opportunity of watching my lady's movements, and made friends with Sophy Jeffers, her maid.

On the day I took the jewels Jeffers had laid out Lady Castlecourt's clothes, together with the case containing the diamonds,

in my lady's bedroom. I darted in and took the diamonds out of the case while Jeffers was talking with Chawlmers, my lord's man, in the sitting-room.

Jeffers heard me as I went out. She was in the room almost as I closed the door. Before she could have got on to the landing I was in a cupboard hunting for a dustpan. But she evidently suspected nothing.

I stole out of the hotel and back to Tom, my husband, at our flat in Knightsbridge.

We unmounted the diamonds, and I carried them about in a bag pinned inside my bodice.

One night Tom and I went out, with the intention of going to the theatre. I had suspicions that our cab was being followed, and under cover of the fog we slipped into the house of a Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, Americans with great social ambitions, passing ourselves off as Major and Mrs. Thatcher.

Towards the end of the evening I took the bag of diamonds out of my dress, and leaning towards Mrs. Kennedy, asked her to give it to a mythical Amelia. Mrs. Kennedy, who I could see was unwilling to acknowledge her ignorance of "Amelia," acquiesced: I was most relieved to be quit of the jewels, though the connection of our gang with them did not end there.

■ ■ ■

Statement of Cassius P. Kennedy, manager of the London Branch of the Colonial Box, Tub, and Cordage Co. (Ltd.), of Chicago and St. Louis.

MY wife—she was Daisy K. Fairweather, of Buncumville, Indiana—and I had been in London two years, when we were involved in a most unpleasant predicament.

One night, as we waited for dinner to be announced, a cab rattled up. A minute later the door-bell rang sharply, and Daisy and I heard a lady's voice in the hall.

Through the curtain I saw a man and woman taking off their wraps. I knew neither of them, but could tell by their appearance that they were the real thing—the kind Daisy was always cultivating.

We were expecting to dine alone, but as these people had come they must be fed.

Perkins announced :

"Major and Mrs. Thatcher."

Now, Daisy and I had not the least idea who they were, but we put on our best smiles to greet the strangers. Even from the conversation that ensued we couldn't place them.

Just before she went Mrs. Thatcher gave Daisy a small bag for a certain unknown Amelia. After their departure we emptied the bag and out fell a handful of diamonds.

We could make nothing of this mysterious present until suddenly I remembered reading of the loss of Lady Castlecourt's diamonds. These might be they, and that woman would make it appear that we had stolen them! What were we to do?

The subsequent disposal of the jewels is a matter in which my wife is more concerned than I am:

■ ■ ■

Statement of Daisy K. Fairweather Kennedy, late of Necropolis City, Ohio, at present a resident of 15 Hanley Street, Knights-bridge, London:

I BELIEVE it is not necessary for me to state how a chamois skin bag containing one hundred and sixty-two diamonds came into my hands on the evening of May 14th. That it did come into my hands was enough for me. I never before thought that the possession of diamonds could make a woman so perfectly miserable.

When I was a young girl in Necropolis City I used to think that to own a diamond—even one small one—would be just about the acme of human joy. But Necropolis City is a good way behind me now, and I have found that the owning of a handful of them can be about the most wearing form of misery:

I suppose there are fearless, upright people in the world who would have taken those diamonds straight back to the police-station and braved public opinion: It would have been better to have had your word doubted, to have been tried for a thief, put in gaol, and probably complicated the diplomatic relations between England and the United States, than to have concealed in your domicile one hundred and sixty-two precious stones that didn't belong to you:

I hope everyone understands—and I'm sure everyone does who knows me—that I did not want to keep the miserable things:

What good did they do me, anyway, locked up in my jewel-box, in the upper right-hand bureau drawer?

We knew no peace from that tragic evening when Major and Mrs. Thatcher dined with us. First we tried to think of ways of getting rid of them—of the diamonds, I mean: Cassius, who's just a simple, uncomplicated man, wanted to take them right to the nearest police-station and hand them in: I soon showed him the madness of *that*.

Was there a soul in London who would have believed our story? Wouldn't the American Ambassador himself have had to bow his crested head and tame his heart of fire, and admit it was about the fishiest tale he had ever heard?

It would have ruined us for ever. Even if Cassius hadn't been deposed from his place as the head of the English branch of the Colonial Box, Tub, and Cordage Company (Ltd.), of Chicago and St. Louis, who would have known me?

The trail of the diamonds would have been over us for ever: Lady Clara Gyves would have gone round saying she always thought I had the face of a thief, and the bishop and the two lords I've collected with such care would have cut me dead in the Park: I would have received my social quietus for ever:

And, I tell you, when I've worked for a thing just as I have for that bishop and the two lords and Lady Clara Gyves, I'm not going to give them up without a struggle.

Cassius and I spent two feverish, agonised weeks trying to think what we would do with the diamonds. I never knew before I had so much inventive ability. It was wonderful the things we thought of. One of our ideas was to put a personal in the papers advertising for "Amelia." We spent five consecutive evenings concocting different ones that would have the effect of arousing "Amelia's" curiosity and deadening that of everybody else. It did not seem capable of construction:

Twist and turn it as you would, you couldn't state that you had something valuable in your possession for "Amelia" without making the paragraph bristle with a sort of mysterious importance. It was like a trap set and baited to catch the attention of a detective:

We did insert one—"Will Amelia kindly publish her present address, and oblige Major and Mrs. Thatcher?"—which, after all, didn't involve us. And for two weeks

we read the papers with beating, hopeful hearts, but there was no reply. I thought "Amelia" never saw it: Cassius thought there was no such person.

A month dragged itself away, and there we were with those horrible gems locked in my jewel-box. I began to look pale and miserable, and Cassius told me he thought the diamonds were becoming a "fixed idea" with me, and he'd have to take me away for a change.

Once I told him I felt as if I'd never have any peace, or be my old gay self again, while they were in my possession: He said, that being the case, he'd take them out some night and throw them in the Serpentine, the pond where the despondent people commit suicide. But I dissuaded him from it.

"Perhaps they'll never be claimed," I said. "And some day when we're old we can have them set and Elaine can wear them."

"You might even wear them yourself," Cassius said, trying to cheer me up.

"What would be the good?" I answered gloomily: "I'd be at least sixty before I'd dare to."

All through June I lived under this wearing strain, and I grew thinner and more nervous day by day: The season which is always so lovely and gay was no longer an exciting and joyous time for me. I drove down Bond Street with a frowning face, and it did not cheer me up at all to see how many people I seemed to know.

Looking down the vistas of quiet, asphalted streets, where the lines of sedate house fronts are brightened by polished brasses on the doors and flower-boxes at the windows, I was no longer filled with an exhilarating determination some day to be an honoured guest in every house that was worth entering.

When I drove by the green ovals of the little parks, which you can't enter without a private key, I experienced none of my old ambition to have a key too, and go in and mingle with the aristocracy sitting on wooden benches.

Even meeting the Countess of Belsborough at a reception, and being asked by her, in a sociable, friendly way, if I knew her cousin John, who was mining somewhere in Mexico or Honduras—she wasn't sure which—did not cheer me up at all.

The change in me was extraordinary: When I first came to London, if even a curate or a clerk from the City had asked

me such a question, I'd have made an effort to remember John, as if Mexico had been my front garden and I'd played all round Honduras when I was a child. Now I said to Lady Belsborough that neither Mexico nor Honduras was part of the United States quite snappishly, as if I thought she were stupid: And all because of those diamonds!

It was towards the end of June, and the days were getting warm, when the climax came.

The pressure of the season was abating: The rhododendrons were dead in the Park, and there was dust on the trees. In St. James' the grass was quite worn and patchy, and strangely-clad people lay on it, sleeping in the sun. One met a great many American tourists in white shirt-waists and long veils.

I thought of the time when I, too, innocently and unthinkingly, had worn a white shirt-waist, and it didn't seem to me such a horrible time, after all—at least, I did not then have one hundred and sixty-two stolen diamonds in my jewel-box. My heart was lighter in those days, even if my shirt-waist had only cost a few shillings at a department store in Necropolis City.

The month ended with a spell of what the English call "frightful heat." It was quite warm weather, and we sat a good deal on the little balcony that juts out from my window over the front door.

Hanley Street is quiet and rather out of the line of general traffic, so we had chairs and a table there, and used to have tea served under the one palm, which was all there was room for. We could not have visitors there, for it opened out of my bedroom: So our tea-parties on the balcony were strictly family affairs—just Cassius, and Elaine, and I.

The last day of the month was really very warm. Every door in the house was open, and the servants went about gasping, with their faces crimson. I dined at home alone that evening, as one of the members of the Box, Tub, and Cordage Company was in London, at the Carlton, and Cassius was dining with him: I did not expect him home till late, as there would be lots to talk over.

I had not felt well all day. The heat had given me a headache, and after dinner I lay on the sofa in the sitting-room, feeling quite miserable. Only a few of the lamps were lit, and the house was dim and extremely quiet. Being alone that way in the half-dark

got on my nerves, and I decided I'd go upstairs and get to bed early. I always did hate sitting about by myself, and now more than ever, with the diamonds on my conscience:

Our stairs are thickly carpeted, and as I had on thin satin slippers and a crêpe tea-gown I made no noise at all coming up. I always have a light burning in my room, so when I saw a yellow gleam below the door I did not think anything of it, but just softly pushed the door open and went in.

Then I stopped dead where I stood. A man with a soft felt hat on, and a handkerchief tied over the lower part of his face, was standing in front of the bureau!

He had not heard me, and for a moment I stood without making a sound, watching him. The two gas-jets on either side of the bureau were lit, and that part of the room was flooded with light. Very quickly and softly he was turning over the contents of the drawers, taking out laces, gloves, and veils, throwing them in this direction and that out of his way, and opening every box he found.

My heart gave a great leap when I saw him seize upon the jewel-box, and my mouth unfortunately emitted some kind of a sound—I think it was a sort of gasp of relief, but I'm not sure.

Whatever it was he heard. He gave a start as if he had been electrified, raised his head, and saw me. For just one second he stood staring, and then he said something—of a profane character, I think—and ran for the balcony.

And I ran too. There was something in the way—a little table, I believe—and he collided with it. That checked him for a moment, and I got to the window first. I threw myself across it with my arms spread out, in an attitude like that assumed by Sara Bernhardt when she is barring her lover's exit in *Fedora*. But I don't think any actress ever barred her lover's exit with as much determination and zeal as I barred the exit of that burglar.

"You can't go!" I cried wildly. "You've forgotten something!"

He paused just in front of me, and I cried again:

"You haven't got them; they're in the jewel-box."

He moved forward and laid his hand on my arm, to push me aside. I felt quite desperate, and wailed:

"Oh, don't go without opening the

jewel-box. There are some things in it I know you will like."

He tried to push me out of the way—gently, it is true, but with force. But I clung to him, clasped him by the arm with what must have appeared quite an affectionate grip, and continued imploringly:

"Don't be in such a hurry! I'm sorry I interrupted you. If you'll promise not to go till you've looked through my things and taken what you want, I'll leave the room. It was quite by accident that I came."

The burglar let go my arm, and looked at me over the handkerchief with a pair of eyes that seemed quite kind and pleasant.

"Really," he said, in a deep, gentlemanly voice that seemed familiar—"really, I don't quite understand—"

"I know you don't," I interrupted impulsively. "How could you be expected to? And I can't explain. It's a most complicated matter, and would take too long. Only don't be frightened and run away till you've taken something. You've endangered your life and risked going to prison to get in here; and wouldn't it be too foolish, after that, to go empty-handed? Now, in the jewel-box"—I indicated it, and spoke in what I hoped was a most insinuating tone—"there are some things that I think you'd like. If you'd just look at them—"

"You're the most persuasive lady," said the burglar, "but—"

He moved again towards the window. A feeling of absolute anguish that he was going without the diamonds pierced me. I threw myself in front of him again, and in some way, I can't tell just how, caught the handkerchief that covered his face and pulled it down. There were the handsome visage and long moustache of Major Thatcher.

I backed away from him in the greatest confusion. He, too, blushed and looked uncomfortable.

"Oh, Major Thatcher," I murmured, "I beg your pardon! I'm so sorry. I don't know how it happened. I think the end of the handkerchief caught in my bracelet."

"Pray don't mention it," answered the major.

Then we were both silent, standing opposite one another, not knowing what to say. It is not easy to muddle me, but it must be admitted that the situation was unusual.

"How is Mrs. Thatcher?" I said desperately, when the silence had become unbearable. And the major replied, in his deepest voice, and with his most abrupt, military air:

"Ethel's very fit. Never was better in her life, thank you. Mr. Kennedy is quite well, I hope?"

"Cassius is enjoying the best of health," I answered. "He's out to-night, I'm sorry to say."

"Just fancy," said Major Thatcher. Then there was a pause, and he added: "How tiresome!"

I could think of nothing more to say, and again we were silent. It was really the most uncomfortable position I ever was in. The major was a burglar beyond a doubt, but he looked and talked just like a gentleman.

Besides, he'd dined with us. That makes a great difference. When a man has broken bread at your table as a respectable fellow creature, it's hard to get your mind round to despising him as a thief. I felt that the only thing to do was to graciously ignore it all, as you do when someone spills the claret on your best table-cloth. At the same time, there were the diamonds! I could not let the chance escape:

"Oh, Major Thatcher!" I said, with an air of suddenly remembering something. "I don't know whether you are aware that your wife left a little package here that evening when you dined with us. It was for Amelia."

Major Thatcher looked at me with the most imperturbable expression:

"To be sure," he murmured, "for Amelia."

"Well," I went on, trying to impart to my words a light Society tone, "you know we can't find her. Very stupid of us, I have no doubt. But we've tried, and we can't anywhere."

Major Thatcher stared blankly at the dressing-table:

"Strange, 'pon my word!" he said heavily.

"So, Major Thatcher, if you don't mind, I'll give it back to you. I think, all things considered, it will be best for you to give it to Amelia yourself."

I went towards the dressing-table:

"You don't mind, do you?" I said, over my shoulder, as I opened the jewel-box.

"Not at all, not at all!" answered the major. "Anything to oblige a lady."

I drew out the bag of chamois skin. "Here it is," I said, holding it out to him. "You'll find it in perfect condition and quite complete. I'm so sorry that we couldn't discover Amelia. Not knowing the rest of her name was rather inconvenient. There were dozens of Amelias in the directory."

The major took the bag, and put it in his breast-pocket.

"Dozens of Amelias," he repeated, slapping his pocket.

"We even advertised," I continued. "Perhaps you saw the personal; it was in the morning *Herald*, and was very short and non-committal, but no one answered it."

"We saw it," said the major. "Yes, I recollect quite distinctly seeing it. It—it—indicated to us—aw—aw——"

The major reddened and paused, pulling his moustache.

"That we hadn't found Amelia and still had the present," I answered in a sprightly tone. "That was just it. And so you came to get it? Very kind of you, indeed, Major Thatcher."

The major bowed. He was really a very fine-looking, well-mannered man. If he only had been the honest, respectable person we first thought him I would have liked to have added him to my collection. I'm sure if you knew him better he would have been much more interesting than the bishop and the lords.

"The kindness is on your side," he said. "And now, Mrs. Kennedy, I think—I think perhaps"—he looked at the window that opened on to the balcony—"I think I'd better——"

"You must be going!" I cried, just as I say it to the bishop when he puts down his cup and looks at the clock. "How unfortunate! But of course your other engagements——"

I checked myself, suddenly realising that it wasn't just the thing to say to the major. When you're talking to a burglar it doesn't seem delicate or thoughtful to allude to his "other engagements." That I made such a mistake is due to the fact that I'd never talked to a burglar before, and was bound to be a little green:

The major did not seem to mind:

"Exactly so," he said. "My time is just now much occupied—I—er—I——" He looked again at the window. "I—er—entered that way," he said. "But perhaps——"

"I don't think I'd go out that way if I

were you," I answered hurriedly; "it would look so queer if anyone saw you."

"Would the other and more usual exit be safe?" he asked. His eyes, as they met mine, were charged with a keener intelligence than I had seen in them before.

"It would have to be," I answered, with sudden spirit. "What do you suppose the servants would think if they saw you coming out of here? This, Major Thatcher, is my room!"

"Dear me!" said the major, "I suppose it is. I never thought of that."

"Wait here till I see if it is all right," I said, "and then I'll come back and tell you."

I went into the hall and looked over the banisters. The gas was burning faintly, and a bar of pink lamplight fell out from the half-drawn *portières* of the drawing-room. There was not a sound. I knew the servants were all in the back part of the house, quite safe till eleven o'clock, when, if we were not home, they turned out the lights and locked up. I stole softly back into my room. The major was standing in front of the mirror untying the handkerchief that hung round his neck.

"It's all right," I assured him, in an unconsciously lowered voice. "You can go quite easily; I'll let you out. Only you mustn't make the least bit of noise."

He thrust the handkerchief in his pocket and put on his hat, pulling the brim down over his eyes. I must confess he didn't look half so distinguished this way. When the handkerchief was gone I saw he wore a flannel shirt with a turned-down collar, and with his hat shading his face he certainly did seem a strange sort of man for me to be conducting down the stairs at half-past ten at night. If Perkins, who'd come to us bristling with respectability from a distinguished, evangelical, aristocratic family, should meet us, I should never hold up my head again.

"Now, if you hear Perkins," I whispered, "for Heaven's sake, hide somewhere. Run back to my room, if you can't go anywhere else. Perkins *must not* see you!"

The major growled out some reply, and we tiptoed breathlessly across the hall to the stair-head. I was much more frightened than he was. I know, as I stole from step to step, my heart kept beating faster and faster.

Such awful things might have happened: Perkins suddenly appear to put out the lights; Cassius come home early from the

dinner, and open the front door just as I was about to let the major out!

When we reached the door I was quite faint, while the major seemed as cool as if he'd been paying a call.

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," he said, trying to take off his hat. "I shan't forget it."

"Oh, never mind being polite," I gasped. "You've got the diamonds. That's all that matters. Good-night. Give my regards to Mrs. Thatcher."

And he was gone! I shut the door and crept upstairs. First I felt faint, and then I felt hysterical. When Cassius came home at eleven I was lying on the sofa in tears, and all I could say to him was to sob:

"The diamonds are gone! The diamonds are gone!"

He thought I'd gone mad at first, and then when I finally made him understand he was nearly as excited as I. He went downstairs and brought up a bottle of champagne, and we celebrated at midnight up in our room. We had to tell lies to Perkins afterwards to explain how we came to be one bottle short.

But what did lies matter, or even Perkins' opinion of us? We were no longer crushed under the weight of one hundred and sixty-two diamonds that didn't belong to us!

That is the history of my connection with the diamonds. From that night I've never seen or heard of them, nor have I seen Major or Mrs. Thatcher. The diamonds entered our possession and departed from it exactly as I have told, and though my statement may call for greater credulity on the part of my readers, all I can say is that I am willing to vouch for the truth of every word of it.

■ ■ ■

Statement of Gladys, Marchioness of Castlecourt.

I AM sure if anyone was ever punished for their misdeeds it was I. I suppose

I ought to say sins, but it is such an unpleasant word! I cannot imagine myself committing sins, and yet that is just what I seem to have done. I couldn't have been more astonished if someone had told me I was going to commit murder.

One thing I have learnt—you do not know what you may do till you have been tempted. And then you do wrong before you realise it, and all of a sudden it comes upon you that you are a criminal quite unexpectedly, and no one is more surprised than you.

I certainly know I was the most surprised person in London when I realised that I—— But there, I am wandering all about, and I want to tell my story simply and shortly:

Everybody knows that when I married Lord Castlecourt I was poor. What everybody does not know is that I was a natural spendthrift. Extravagance was in my blood, as drinking or the love of cards is in the blood of some men: I had never had any money at all. I used to wear the same gloves for years, and always made my own frocks—not badly, either: I've made gowns that Lady Bundy said—— But that has nothing to do with it; I'm getting away from the point:

As I said before, I was poor: I didn't know how extravagant I was till I married and Lord Castlecourt gave me six hundred pounds a year to dress on. It was a fortune to me: I'd never thought one woman could have so much:

The first two years of our married life I did not exceed it, because we lived most of the time in the country, and I was unused to it, and spent it slowly and carefully. I was still unaccustomed to it when, after my second boy was born, Herbert brought me to town for my first season since our marriage:

Then I began to spend money, quantities of it, for it seemed to me that six hundred pounds a year was absolutely inexhaustible: When I saw anything pretty in a shop I bought it, and I generally forgot to ask the price. The shop people were always kind and agreeable, and seemed to have forgotten about it as completely as I:

After I had bought one thing they would urge me to look at something else, which was put away in a drawer or laid out in a cardboard box, and if I liked it I bought that too. If I ever paused to think that I was buying a great deal, I contented myself with the assurance that I had six hundred pounds a year, which was so much I would never get to the end of it:

After that first season a great many bills came in, and I was quite surprised to see I'd spent already, with the year hardly half gone, more than my six hundred pounds:

I could not understand how it had happened, and I asked Herbert about it and showed him some of my bills, and for the first time in our married life he was angry with me. He scolded me quite sharply, and told me I must keep within my allowance: I was hurt, and also rather muddled, with all these different accounts—most of which

I could not remember—and I made up my mind not to consult Herbert any more, as it only vexed him and made him cross to me, and that I cannot bear. All the world must love me.

If there is a servant-maid in the house who does not like me—and I can feel it in a minute if she doesn't—I must make her, or she must go away: But my husband, the best and finest man in the world, to have him annoyed with me and scolding me over stupid bills!

Never again would that happen: I showed him no more of them; in fact, I generally tore them up as they came in, for fear I should leave them lying about and he would find them. If I could help it, nothing in the world was ever going to come between Herbert and me.

I also made good resolutions to be more careful in my expenditure. And I really tried to keep them. I don't know how it happened that they did not seem to get kept: But both in London and in Paris I certainly did spend a great deal—I'm sure I don't know how much:

I did little accounts on the back of notes, and they were so confusing, and I seemed to have spent so much more than I thought I had, that I gave up doing them:

After I'd covered the back of two or three notes with figures, I got so low-spirited that I couldn't enjoy anything for the rest of the day. I didn't see that that did anybody any good, so I ceased keeping the accounts. And what was the use of keeping them? If I had not the money to pay them with, why should I make myself miserable by thinking about them? I thought it much more sensible to try to forget them, and most of the time I did!

It went on that way for two years. When I got bills with things written across the bottom in red ink I paid part of them—never all; I never paid all of anything.

Once or twice tradesmen wrote me letters, saying they must have their money, and then I went to see them, and told them how kind it was of them to trust me, and how I would pay them everything soon, and they seemed quite pleased and satisfied: I always intended doing it: I don't know where I thought the money was coming from, but you never can tell what may happen:

Some friends of Herbert had a place near the Scotch border, and found a coal-mine in the forest. Herbert has no lands near Scotland, but he has in other places, and

he may find a coal-mine too. I simply cite this as an example of the strange ways things turn out. I didn't exactly expect that Herbert would find a coal-mine, but I did expect that money would turn up in some unexpected way and help me out of my difficulties.

The beginning of the series of really terrible events of which I am writing was the purchase of a Russian sable jacket from a furrier in Paris called Bolkonsky. It was in the early Spring of last year.

I had had no dealings with Bolkonsky before. A friend told me of the jacket, and took me there. It was a real opportunity. I knew the moment that I saw it that it was one of those chances with which one rarely meets. It fitted me like a charm, and I bought it for a thousand pounds. That miserable Bolkonsky told me the payments might be made in any way I liked and at any time.

I also bought some good turquoises that were going for a mere song from a jeweller upstairs somewhere near the Rue de La Paix, who was selling out the jewels of an actress. It was these two people who ruined me.

Not that they were my only debtors. I knew by this time that I owed a great deal. When I thought about it I was frightened, and so I tried not to think. But sometimes when I was awake at night, and everything looked dark and depressed, I wondered what I would do if something did not happen.

In these moments I thought of telling my husband, and I buried my head in the pillow and turned cold with misery. What would Herbert say when he found out that his wife was thousands of pounds in debt—the Marquis of Castlecourt, who had never owed a penny and considered it a disgrace?

Perhaps he would be so horrified and disgusted he would send me away from him—back to Ireland or to the Continent. And what would happen to me then?

That summer we went to Castlecourt Marsh Manor, and there my anxieties became almost unbearable. Bolkonsky began to dun me most cruelly. Other creditors wrote me letters, urging for payment.

The jeweller from whom I had bought the turquoises sent me a letter, telling me that if I didn't settle his account by September he would sue me. And finally Bolkonsky sent a man over, whom I saw in London, and who told me that unless the sable jacket were paid for within two months

he would "lay the matter before Lord Castlecourt."

We went across to Paris in September, and there I saw those dreadful people. My other French and English creditors I could manage, but I could do nothing with either Bolkonsky or the jeweller. They spoke harshly to me—as no one has ever spoken to me before; and Bolkonsky told me that "it was known Lord Castlecourt was honest and paid his debts, whatever his wife was."

I prayed him for time, and finally wept—wept to that horrible Jew; and there was another man in the office, too, who saw me. But I was lost to all sense of pride or reserve. I had only one feeling left in me—terror, agony, that they would tell my husband, and he would despise me and leave me.

My misery seemed to have some effect on Bolkonsky, and he told me he would give me till the 10th of October to pay up: It was then the 18th of September.

I waited for a week in a sort of frenzy of hope that a miracle would occur, and the money come into my hands in some unexpected way. But, of course, nothing did occur.

By the 1st of October the one thousand pounds was no nearer. It was then that the desperate idea entered my head which has nearly ruined me, and caused me such suffering that the memory of it will stay with me for ever.

The Castlecourt diamonds, set in a necklace and valued at nine thousand pounds, were in my possession. I often wore them, and they were carried about by my maid, a faithful and honest creature called Sophy Jeffers.

On one of my first trips to Paris a friend of mine had taken me to the office of a well-known dealer in precious and artificial stones who, without its being generally known, did a sort of pawnbroking business among the upper classes. My friend had gone there to pawn a pearl necklace, and had told me all about it—how much she had obtained on the necklace, and how she hoped to redeem it within the year, and how she was to have it copied in imitation pearls: The idea that came to me was to go to this place and pawn the Castlecourt diamonds, having them duplicated in paste.

I went there on the second day of October: How awful it was! I wore a heavy veil, and gave a fictitious name. Several men looked at the diamonds, and I noticed that they looked at me and whispered together: Finally they told me they would give me

four thousand pounds on them, at some interest—I've forgotten what it was—and that they would replace them with paste, so that only an expert could tell the difference.

The next day I went back, and they gave me the money. I do not think they had any idea who I was. At any rate, while the papers were full of speculations about the Castlecourt diamonds they made no sign:

I paid off all my debts, both in Paris and London; I even paid a year's interest on the diamonds. For a short time I breathed again, and was gay and light-hearted. My husband would never know that I had not paid my bills for five years and had been threatened with a lawsuit.

It was delightful to get rid of this fear, and I was quite my old self. I suppose I ought to have felt myself more guilty. But when one is relieved of a great weight, one's conscience is not so sensitive as it gets when there is really nothing to be sensitive about.

It was after I had grown accustomed to feeling free and unworried that I began to realise what I had done. I had stolen the diamonds. I was a thief!

It did not comfort me much to think that no one might ever find it out; in fact, I do not think it comforted me at all, and I know in the beginning I expected it would. It was what I had done that rankled in me. I felt that I would never be peaceful again till they were redeemed and put back in their old settings.

That was what I continually dreamt of. It seemed to me that if I could see them once more in their own case I would be happy and care free, as I had been in those first perfect years of my married life.

The fear that at this time most haunted me and was most terrifying was that my husband might discover what I had done. His wife, that he had so loved and trusted, had become a thief! No one knows who has not gone through it how I felt. I did not know anyone could suffer so.

I went out constantly to try to forget, and when things were very cheerful and amusing I sometimes did. And then I remembered—I was a thief, I had stolen my husband's diamonds, and if he ever found it out, what would happen to me?

This was the position I was in when the false diamonds were taken. It was the last thing in the world I had thought could happen.

When, that night of the Duke of Duxbury's dinner, I saw the empty case and Jeffers' terrified face, the world reeled round me. I could not for a moment take it in. Only in my mind the diamonds had become a sort of nightmare; anything to do with them was a menace, and I followed an instinct that had possession of me when I tried to hide the empty case from my husband.

Then when my mind had cleared, and I had time to think, I saw that if they recovered the paste necklace they might find out that it was not real, and all would be lost. It was a horrible predicament. I really did not know what I wanted.

If the diamonds were found and seen to be false it would all come out, and Herbert would know I was a thief. When I thought of this I tried to divert the detectives from hunting for them, and I told that silly, sheepish Mr. Brison that I did not see how he could be so sure they were stolen, that they might have been mislaid.

Mr. Brison seemed surprised, and that made me angry because, after all, a diamond necklace is not the sort of thing that gets mislaid, and I felt I had been foolish and had not gained anything by being so.

The days passed, and nothing was heard of the necklace. I wished desperately now that it would be found. For how, unless it was, could I eventually redeem the real diamonds, and once more feel honest and respectable?

If I suddenly appeared with them, how could I explain it? Everybody would say I had stolen them, unless I invented some story about their being lost and then found, and I am not clever at inventing stories. As to where I should get the money to redeem them, I often thought of that; but I could not think of any way that was both possible and reasonable. I had always waited for "things to turn up," and they generally did.

But in this case nothing that I wanted or expected turned up. Besides, four thousand pounds is a good deal of money to come into one's hands suddenly and unexpectedly. If it were a smaller sum it might, but four thousand pounds was too much. There was nobody to die and leave it to me, and I certainly could not steal, or make it myself.

So, as one may see, I was beset with troubles on all sides. The season wore itself away, and I was glad to be done with it.

For the first time there had been no pleasure in it: Anxieties, that no one guessed, were always with me, and always I found myself surreptitiously watching my husband to see if he suspected, to see if he showed any symptoms of growing cold to me and being indifferent:

As I drove through the Park in the carriage these dreary thoughts were always at my heart, and it was heavy as lead: I forgot the passers-by who were so amusing, and, with my head hanging, looked into my lap:

Suppose Herbert guessed? Suppose Herbert found out? These were the questions that went circling through my brain and never stopped. Sometimes, when Herbert was beside me, I suddenly wanted to cry out:

"Herbert, I took the diamonds! I was the thief! I can't hide it any more, or live in this uncertainty. All I want to know is, do you hate me and are you going to leave me?"

But I never did it: I looked at Herbert, and was afraid: What would I do if he left me? Go back to Ireland and die.

We went to Castlecourt Marsh Manor at the end of June: By this time I had begun to feel quite ill. Herbert insisted on my consulting a doctor before I left town, and the doctor said my heart was all wrong and something was the matter with my nerves. But it was only the sense of guilt that every day grew more oppressive:

I thought I might feel better in the country: I had always disliked it, and now it seemed like a harbour of refuge, where I could be quiet with my children: I had grown to hate London: It was London that had played upon my weaknesses and drawn me into all my trouble.

I had not run into debt in the country, and, after all, I had never been as happy as I was the two years after our marriage, when we had lived at Castlecourt Marsh Manor. Those were my *beaux jours*! How bright and beautiful they seemed now, when I looked back on them from these dark days of fear and disgrace!

It was not much better in the country: A change of scene cannot make a difference when the trouble is a guilty conscience: And that guilty conscience kept growing more guilty every day: I feared to speak of the diamonds to Herbert, and yet every letter that came for him filled me with alarm, lest it was to say either that they were found or that they were not found:

Herbert went up to London at intervals

and saw Mr. Gilsey, and at night when he came home I trembled so much that I found it difficult to wait till he had told me all that Mr. Gilsey had said. Once, when he was beginning to tell me that Mr. Gilsey had some idea they had traced the diamonds to Paris, I fainted, and it was some time before they could bring me round.

July was very hot, and I gave that as the cause of my changed appearance and listless manner. I was really in wretched health, and Herbert became exceedingly worried about me: He suggested that we should go on the Continent for a trip, but I shrank from the thought of it: I felt as if the sight of Paris, where the diamonds were waiting to be redeemed, would kill me outright: I did not want to leave Castlecourt Marsh Manor to go anywhere: I only wanted to be happy again—to be as I was before I had taken the diamonds:

And I knew now that this could never be till I told my husband: I knew that to win back my peace of mind I had to tell, and hear him say he forgave me: I tried to several times, but it was impossible. As the moment that I had chosen for confession approached, my heart beat so that I could scarcely breathe, and I trembled like a person in a chill:

With Herbert looking at me so kindly, so tenderly, the words died away on my lips, or I said something quite different from what I had intended saying: It was useless. As the days went by I knew that I would never dare tell, that for the rest of my life I would be crushed under the sense of guilt that seemed too heavy to be borne.

It was late one afternoon in the middle of July that the crash came: Never, never shall I forget that day! So dark and awful at first, and then—but I must follow the story just as it happened:

Herbert and I had had tea in the library. It was warm weather, and the windows that led to the terrace were wide open: Through them I could see the beautiful landscape, rolling hills with great trees dotted over them, all the colours brighter and deeper than at midday, for the sun was getting low:

I was sitting by one of the windows looking out on this, and thinking how different had been my feelings when I had come here as a bride and loved it all, and been so full of joy. My hands hung limp over the arms of the chair: I had no desire to move or speak. It is so agonising, when you are

miserable, looking back on days that were happy!

As I was sitting this way, Thomas, one of the footmen, came in with the letters: I noticed that he had quite a packet of them. Some were mine, and I laid them on the table at my elbow. Idly and without interest I noticed that in Herbert's bunch there was a small box, such as jewellery is sent about in. Thomas left the room, and I continued looking out of the window until I suddenly heard Herbert give a suppressed exclamation: I turned towards him, and saw that he had the open box in his hand.

"What does this mean?" he said: "What an extraordinary thing! Look here, Gladys."

And he came towards me, holding out the box. It was full of cotton wool, and lying on this were a great quantity of unset diamonds of different sizes. My heart gave a leap into my throat. I sat up, clutching the arms of the chair:

"What are they?" I said, hearing my voice very high and loud: "Where did they come from?"

"I don't know anything about them! It's very queer! See what's written on this piece of paper that was inside the box."

He held out a small piece of paper, on which the creases of several folds were plainly marked. Across it, in typing, ran two sentences. I snatched the paper and read the words:

We don't want *your* diamonds. You can keep them, and with them accept our kind regards.

The paper fluttered to my feet. I knew in a moment what it all meant. The thieves had discovered that the diamonds were paste, and had returned them. I was conscious of Herbert's startled face suddenly charged with an expression of sharp anxiety as he cried:

"Why, Gladys, what is it? You're as white as death!"

He came towards me, but I motioned him away and rose to my feet. I knew then that the hour had come, and though I expect I *was* very white, I did not feel so frightened as I had done in the past.

"Those are your diamonds, Herbert," I said, quietly and distinctly, "or, perhaps, I ought to say those are the substitutes for them. *Your* diamonds are in Paris, at Barrière's, on the Rue Croix des Petits Champs."

"Gladys," he exclaimed, "what do you mean? What are you talking about?"

You look so white and strange! Sit down, darling, and tell me what you mean."

"Oh, Herbert," I cried, with my voice suddenly full of agony, "let me tell you: Don't stop me. If you're angry with me and hate me, wait till I've finished before you say so. I've got to confess it all."

And then I told—I told it all. I didn't leave out a single thing. My first bills, and Bolkonsky, and the jeweller, and the pawnbroking place, and everything was in it. Once I was started, it was not so hard, and I poured it out. I didn't try to make it better, or ask to be forgiven. But when it was all finished, I said, in a voice which had become husky and trembling:

"And now I suppose you'll not like me any more? It's quite natural that you shouldn't. I ask only one thing, and I know, of course, I have no right to ask it—that is, that you won't send me away from you. I have been very wicked. I suppose I ought to be put in prison. But—oh, Herbert, no matter what I've been, I've loved you! That's something."

I could not go any further, and there was no need; for my dear husband did not seem angry at all. He took me, all weeping and trembling, into his arms, and said the sweetest things to me—the sort of things one doesn't write down with a pen.

And I?—I turned my face against his shoulder and cried feebly, and was happy once more.

Well, that is really the end of the statement. Herbert went to Paris a few days later and redeemed the diamonds, and they are now being set in imitation of the old settings, which are lost. I would not go to Paris with him. Nor will I go to London next season. Both places are too full of horrible memories.

Perhaps some day I shall feel about them as I did before the diamonds were taken, but now I do not want to leave the country at all. Besides, we can economise here, and the four thousand pounds necessary to get back the stones were a good deal for Herbert to have to pay out just now.

This finishes my statement. I daresay it is a very bald one, for I am not clever at all. But it has the one merit of being entirely truthful, and I have told everything—just how wicked I was, and just why I was so wicked. Nothing has been held back, and nothing has been set down falsely. It is an unprejudiced and accurate account of my share in the Castlecourt Diamond Case.

THE END.

"My Husband is Out."

By GEOFFREY BESANT.

Amateurs who wish to give performances of this little comedy must apply to the Editor, *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

CHARACTERS :

JACK CHATTERIS:

KITTY CHATTERIS (*his wife*):

MAID:

SCENE: *A Room in a Mayfair Flat—Doors L and R*

TIME: *To-day.*

(*Enter JACK CHATTERIS. He has a hat, gloves, and stick. His dress is a quiet, well-cut lounge suit, but his waistcoat, evidently quite new, is startling.*)

JACK (*putting hat and stick on the table, but keeping his gloves on*). Hullo! Kitty not in yet? Little minx! She faithfully promised to be in by five. So I left the other fellows at the Club in the middle of a game of snooker. (*Goes to glass and admires waistcoat.*) By Jove! Smith can turn out a rattling good waistcoat when he takes a bit of trouble. This little lot fetched 'em a bit at the Club. I wonder what Kitty will say to it? Bless her pretty face, she likes me in anything. (*Sits down meditatively.*) What a dear little woman she is! I'd trust her anywhere, and she trusts me absolutely, too. Why, I never objected to her flirting with old Archie Thwayte at Eastbourne last summer, and she didn't mind my trotting round with Archie's missus. Jolly pretty woman Nora Thwayte! (*Gets up.*) Kitty doesn't seem to be coming. (*Picks up "Spectator."*) H'm, new *Spectator*; let's have a look at the dog stories! Hullo! what's this? "Forthcoming books"—h'm—h'm—"We learn that Messrs. Blandford, Thwayte, & Co., Ltd., are bringing out shortly a new novel by Mr. John Blair Chatteris"—why the doose can't they spell my name properly—rotters!—"called 'The Indiscretion of my Husband.'" (*Looks up and wags his head cheerfully.*) You're getting on, my boy. Wonder if it will be a success. Thwayte is awfully keen on it, and wants to see some more work of mine. (*Picks up hat and stick.*) I'll run round to the Club and try to get seats for something or other to-night. Dear little Kitty, I mustn't let her see this notice.

She doesn't know what her scheming old husband has been up to. Ha! Ha!

(*Exit R.*)

(*Enter KITTY in walking dress, with a very pretty new hat. She goes to the glass, and looks at herself critically, re-tilting her hat to a becoming angle.*)

KITTY. There, that's better. When Sylvia really tries, she can make me as smart a hat as you can find this side of Paris. I hope Jack will like it. (*Still posing in front of glass.*) Of course he will! The dear boy, he loves me in any rag I choose to put on. I don't believe I could possibly make him jealous. Was there ever a more adored wife, or a more infatuated husband? Let me see—it's five o'clock: Jack ought to be in soon. Shall I have tea? No, I'll just run round to see Eve Leslie: She'll turn all the colours of the rainbow with jealousy when she sees my new hat: Oh, what fun! If Jack comes in he'll have to cool his toes for a bit.

(*Enter MAID with telegram.*)

MAID. A telegram for the master, please, ma'am. The boy's waiting for an answer:

KITTY (*aside*). For Jack? (*To Maid.*) Oh, well, I'll give it to Mr. Chatteris when he comes in. Tell the boy there's no answer: Stay, wait a moment. It may be important: I had better open it. (*She opens wire and reads it aloud.*) "My husband is out to-day: Come round this afternoon.—THWAYTE."

(*KITTY looks perplexed.*)

MAID. Shall I get you a form for an answer, ma'am?

KITTY (*still puzzled*). No—that is, yes—no—send the boy away. (*Exit MAID. KITTY sits on sofa and reads the wire again.*) "My husband is out to-day. Come round this afternoon.—THWAYTE." Whatever

does it mean? Whose husband? And who is Thwayte? Whom does Jack know called Thwayte? (*Thinks for a few moments.*) There *were* some people called Thwayte at Eastbourne last summer when we went there for the tennis week. The man (*smiles*) was *rather* nice—quite a dear. But the woman (*rather scornfully*)—a yellow-haired person, who smoked and talked about the Palace and the Empire. But it can't be those people. They never called: Let me read it again, "My husband is out to-day. Come round this afternoon.—THWAYTE." It can't be Mr. Thwayte. He wouldn't talk about "my husband." It must be Mrs. Thwayte. Oh! (*gasps*) Jack's a wretch, a horrid wretch! He's been flirting with that woman! That's why he always leaves me all the afternoon! That's why he shuts himself up in his room alone, and says he's working, when he's probably writing verses to that odious yellow-haired person! I must look again. Yes, it's sent from the Southampton Street post-office. Now, I remember, I heard Mr. Thwayte speak about Southampton Street. They must live there. Oh! I'll never—never—speak to Jack again! No! (*Bursts into tears, and then sits up straight.*) He's probably sitting on her knee now! (*Cries.*) I'll go straight home to mother: (*Cries, and then dries her eyes with the wire, and goes to door, leaving the wire on the table.*) The tow-haired mop!

(*Exit L.*)

(*Enter JACK.*)

JACK. Got a box for the Gaiety to-night, and ordered a table at the Savoy. Kitty will like it. (*Sees wire.*) Oh—wire—for me: (*Reads:*) "My husband is out to-day. Come round this afternoon.—THWAYTE." By Jove! That's good, very good! I suppose Thwayte will send me some complimentary copies. (*Enter KITTY unobserved. She stands by door.*) I wonder who opened the wire—the maid?—no, she wouldn't: Kitty, perhaps; bother—I didn't want her to know.

KITTY (*aside*). Villain! I don't suppose you did!

JACK. Never mind! She wouldn't understand. (*Reads again:*) "My husband is out to-day; come round this afternoon." My husband is out to-day. I'm as excited as a school-boy with his first pair of trousers on! (*Goes to door.*) Well, I'm off to the Thwaytes'.

KITTY (*aside*). Villain! I'm off to mother!

JACK (*continuing*). This waistcoat will make a bit of a sensation in Southampton Street! "My husband is out to-day!" Dear old Kitty! I wonder what she'll say?

(*Exit R.*)

KITTY. Beast! (*She comes right into the room.*) The absolute hypocrisy of that man is beyond my comprehension: I don't care, though. I'm going home to mother. (*Goes to door and helps MAID bring in a big trunk. They put it in the middle of the stage.*) Rose, I've put all the clothes I want on my bed. Bring them in, please, and get my traveling cloak: (*Exit MAID L.*) I declare I'll never speak to Jack again: Oh! how can he make love to that yellow-haired woman after all the things he has said to me? Why, only this morning at breakfast I said: "Darling, isn't this a pretty brown egg?" Jack said: "Eggsactly like your pretty brown eyes!" I suppose he's gone off to say the same things to Mrs. Thwayte.

(*Re-enter MAID with an armful of feminine frilly stuff. She drops odd shoes and stockings on the way.*)

MAID. Are you going away for long, ma'am?

KITTY. Oh, no—only for a few days. No, I mean, yes—for a long time. (*Aside dramatically.*) Perhaps for ever!

MAID. Very well, ma'am. Then you'll be wanting to take the photo of the master, I expect. (*Hands photograph of JACK.*) Or shall I put it back in the frame in your room?

KITTY (*aside to photograph*). Oh! you smooth-faced villain! This is the last time I shall ever see your face—the last—last time. (*Puts photograph carefully in her blouse. To MAID, who has started packing:*) I'll do the rest myself, Rose. Will you go and get me a hansom, please?

MAID. You're going at once, then, ma'am? Will you be in to dinner?

KITTY. No—I'm going at once. I shan't be in to dinner: (*Exit MAID.*) I'll never be in to dinner again! Never! (*Takes up shoe and puts it into trunk.*) Never! (*Ditto with stockings. Then suddenly bursts into tears, leaning against the side of trunk. She is sitting on the floor.*)

(*JACK enters unobserved.*)

JACK (*aside*). I thought I'd wait till Kitty came in, and take her round to the Thwaytes': (*Sees Kitty.*) Hullo, there she is—and crying. (*To Kitty:*) What's up, Kits? You're crying:

KITTY. I'm not—how dare you say I am!
JACK. But you *are* crying, darling. Why, the tears are running all over your pretty cheeks, making dear little puddles in the dimples.

KITTY. Go away. Don't speak to me—you—you— (*Pauses for words.*)

JACK (*imitating her*). I—I—what?

KITTY (*petulantly*). I don't know. Leave me alone. I'm p-p-packing.

JACK (*unperturbed*). Going away, dear?

KITTY (*cross, but trying to be dignified*). Yes—I am: (*She looks up to see the effect on Jack. He is still cheerful. She repeats very loudly.*) Yes, I am.

JACK. Where to, dearest?

KITTY. I don't know.

JACK (*aside*). H'm, that generally means Brighton for the week-end, or Ostend. (*To Kitty.*) What time's your train, Kits?

KITTY. I don't know.

JACK. Never mind, dear; let's help you pack. (*Picks up frilly object.*) Where does this lot go?

KITTY (*quickly snatching it from him*). Put it down at once, Jack.

JACK (*contritely*). Sorry, darling:

KITTY. How can you call me darling? You traitor!

JACK. Why am I a traitor, love?

KITTY. It's no good your pretending to care for me. I've discovered your horrid secret.

JACK. The dickens you have! I wonder how you managed that?

KITTY. If I hadn't been so b-blind I'd have seen it all long ago.

JACK (*complacently*). Not so very long ago, darling. I get along very fast once I begin.

KITTY (*amazed*). It's incredible.

JACK. Well, anyhow the murder's out now. I hope you feel proud of your husband?

KITTY. Proud, p-proud (*very squeaky*).—

JACK. Of course, I know it's taken up a lot of my time, that sort of thing is always bound to.

KITTY. Snooker!

JACK. Well, you know I had to make some excuse or you would have suspected something, but really, darling, I don't see why you should be so angry about it; it's not every man who could do as I've done.

KITTY. Fortunately not, and I cannot say I admire your taste. How you could make love to that yellow-haired woman I can't imagine.

JACK (*perplexed*). What yellow-haired woman? I don't think I know any,

except Mrs. Thwayte. She has very pretty golden hair—I call it.

KITTY. Yes. *Yellow* hair I call it! You've been to see her this afternoon: You can't deny it!

JACK (*indignantly*). I haven't been to call on Mrs. Thwayte this afternoon. I've been playing billiards at the club.

KITTY. You—you—fibber. I saw you go. You have bought a nasty red waistcoat especially to attract that woman—and she asked you to come.

JACK (*anxiously—aside*). What on earth's the matter with Kitty?

KITTY (*picking up wire and smoothing it out*). There is her wire to you. "My husband is out to-day: Come round' this afternoon.—THWAYTE." (*With great scorn.*) Can you deny it?

JACK (*bursting into uncontrolled laughter*). Oh, Kitty—Kitty, you darling! What an idea! Forgive me for laughing, but I can't help it.

KITTY (*on the verge of tears*). I suppose it is funny for a man to desert his wife for another woman—a yellow-haired fright.

JACK. Let me tell you all about it, darling.

KITTY (*rising very coldly*). Thank you, *Mister Chatteris*, I know perfectly well. It began last summer at Eastbourne on the pier.

JACK (*remonstrating cheerfully*). But, Kitty, dear—

(*Enter MAID with parcel.*)

MAID (*to Kitty*). The cab's here, ma'am. (*To Jack*). A parcel for you, sir, by hand. (*Exit.*)

JACK (*quickly undoing parcel, and disclosing six copies of a new novel, he reads from cover*). "The Indiscretion of My Husband," by John Blair Chatteris. London: Blandford, Thwayte, & Co., Ltd. There, darling. This is the "husband" that is "out" to-day, and this (*pointing to the name of the publisher on the cover*) is the Thwayte who wired for me to come round this afternoon.

KITTY (*falls into his arms*). Oh, Jack, Jack, please forgive me—please.

JACK. Well, dear, I have a little confession to make.

KITTY (*puzzled*). What, Jack?

JACK. I've arranged to take a very pretty woman out to-night.

KITTY. Jack! Who?

[*JACK whispers.*]

KITTY. Oh! you—darling!

(CURTAIN.)

Mr. Seymour's Ward. * *

* * * * * By UNA HUDSON.

The romance of an unwished-for visitor.

THERE was one letter in Mr. Seymour's post that morning which he read twice. It was from the principal of a young ladies' seminary, informing him that Alice Everton would complete her course of studies the following week, and what were his wishes concerning her?

Mr. Seymour did not know. He had never seen Miss Everton, and had regarded himself as her guardian only so far as her money was concerned.

It had somehow never occurred to him that the day must come when it would be necessary for her to leave the school where she had spent the three years since her father's death.

With a vague idea that it would be well to become personally acquainted with the girl before making any definite arrangements for her future, he wrote that, unless she had planned otherwise, Miss Everton would be made most welcome at his home, and for so long a time as she should see fit.

His boy would be coming home from college soon, he reasoned, and it might be pleasant for him to have another young person in the house. Personally he shrank from the change in his household her coming implied. Since the death of his young wife, when his son was a mere baby, he had lived a life of unbroken quiet.

Alice Everton resolutely fought down the little chill of disappointment which had come over her at finding that only the empty carriage had been sent to meet her. It was foolish, she knew, to have expected Mr. Seymour to come in person. Of course, he must be much too busy for that.

The house, too, strangely chilled and depressed her. Everything was as Mrs. Seymour had left it twenty years before. The very tables and chairs seemed to cry aloud of a joy that had been, and of a grief that yet endured.

She directed the placing of her trunk, and began to unpack listlessly. It was while she was hanging her gowns in the cupboard that there came a knock at the door. The grey-haired butler stood there, and in his hand was a bunch of violets.

"With Mr. Seymour's compliments," he said.

It pleased him to see how the colour raced to the girl's cheeks, and her pensive face brightened.

"Oh, thank you!" she cried. "Thank you! It was so kind of him to remember me."

She put the flowers in water and set them on her toilet table. The simple little gift had made all the difference in the world to the girl's mood. She hummed a little tune as she went on with her unpacking. And she laid out what she considered the prettiest of all her gowns to wear at dinner.

Mr. Seymour turned quickly on hearing a soft footfall behind him. He had expected the entrance of the new member of his household to be heralded by the tap of high-heeled shoes and the rustle of silken skirts. But she had come in softly, and this of itself was sufficient to predispose him in her favour.

Her voice, too, was low and unhurried. "Thank you," she said, "for the flowers. It was more than kind of you to remember me."

"The flowers?" Mr. Seymour did not understand.

She touched the violets at her belt:

"Yes, these."

"But I——" Mr. Seymour was beginning:

Then over her head he caught sight of his butler, who was going through a lively pantomime. Mr. Seymour understood. He frowned, resenting the double liberty the man had taken. But when again he looked down at the girl the same wistful look in

her eyes that had moved his butler stirred him.

"I am glad," he said, "that you liked them."

"I have to thank you for so many kindnesses," Alice went on in her soft voice. "But for you I don't know what I should have done since—since papa died."

Mr. Seymour's heart smote him. He had done so little, and for that little she was so grateful. As they went in to dinner together he was glad that the chance had been given him to atone for past neglect.

It was long since a woman had faced him over the shining glass and silver, and he found the presence of this one very pleasant.

After the meal was ended he went into the library to smoke his cigar. Alice, left to herself, wandered for a little about the big, empty drawing-room. Then she sat down at the piano and began softly to touch the keys.

Mr. Seymour, listening in the library, winced as the first notes broke the stillness. Since his young wife died the piano had stood untouched. No, it was her music that smote upon his ears—the same plaintive melodies, the same softly-crooned songs. His cigar went out, and he forgot to relight it. By-and-by he got up and crossed to the drawing-room. The girl at the piano, all unconscious of her silent listener, kept on playing. At last she rose.

"Oh!" she said, a little startled by the look on Mr. Seymour's face. "You do not mind?"

"No," he said quietly, "I do not mind. They were my wife's songs," he added, after a pause.

Alice Everton thought she understood. She held out her hand. "Good-night!" she said. Her pensive eyes met his kindly ones. "It is so good," she said half shyly, "to have a home to come to."

"To-night," said Mr. Seymour slowly, "it has been more like home than at any time since my wife's death. I thank you for your playing; you must let me hear you again."

* * * * *

In due time Fred Seymour came home from college. The two young people, when introduced, greeted each other politely, but not enthusiastically.

Fred went at once into the office of one of his father's friends—a lawyer. In the evenings he studied in the library or went out with some of his friends.

"Why don't you," his father said one evening, "take Alice somewhere? Aren't there concerts, or theatres, or something of the sort?"

Fred admitted that there were. And he dutifully proffered an invitation. Alice accepted. But when they came back, to Mr. Seymour's great disgust, Fred looked bored, and Alice was yawning openly.

"Well, dad," confessed the younger man, "it wasn't exactly what you might call a howling success."

"So it seems," his father assented grimly. He fidgeted with a paper-cutter he had taken up. "I don't quite see what's the matter," he confessed. "At first I didn't like it because you didn't take her out, now I'm not pleased because you *have*."

"You might," Fred suggested, with eyes carefully turned in another direction, "try taking her about yourself."

The elder Mr. Seymour seriously considered the matter. "I hadn't thought of that," he said. "Er—I believe I'll try it."

He did. Fred purposely stayed in to see them start. When they came back he was lounging in the library. To his discerning eyes his father looked like a man who, after long waiting, has come suddenly into his own. Alice was flushed and laughing. In her hand she carried a square, ribbon-tied box.

She bade the two men a gay good-night, and went at once to her room. An embarrassed silence fell between them. Mr. Seymour's eyes turned to the portrait of his wife. Beneath it on a little table stood a vase of fresh flowers. Alice had placed them there. It was one of the little daily tasks she had taken upon herself.

"She was so young," she had said, "and so pretty: It must have been so hard to die."

"It was hard to have her die," Mr. Seymour had answered.

To-night his eyes fell from the face in the portrait to the flowers beneath. Then he turned to his son.

"She is just the age," he said, "that your mother was when I married her. And she is very like her."

Fred Seymour's eyes rested on his father's tall, erect figure, his handsome face and hair scarcely touched with grey. He thought of the twenty years of loneliness that lay in the past, and he understood.

"She loved you," he said, his eyes on the portrait, "and she would want to see you happy. Dad, go in and win!"

The Honourable Burford. ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By E. M. DELL.

A story in which Fate and Cupid play some strange pranks.

A DYING MAN'S REQUEST.

"ARTHUR, old boy, are you awake?" The voice came out of the darkness of a stifling Indian night and went out in silence. Of the speaker who was stretched on a charpoy, scantily clad in pyjamas, nothing but his cigar-end could be seen.

A pause followed the question. Then, "Yes," came the answer, from the opposite side of a blaze of lamplight that flooded the middle of the verandah from a window. "Can't you sleep, Cheviot?"

"Sleep!" echoed the first voice. "Who could sleep in an inferno like this? Besides"—with an effort—"I don't want any sleep to-night. I've got to make the most of even this. Oh, Arthur, how in thunder shall I do without you, old fellow? I've been wondering for days. And I—I get sort of scared thinking of it. I can't help it. You can call me a fool if you like. But—" a choked cough put an end to the rather incoherent sentences. The cigar-end ceased to glow, and was flung vigorously into the darkness.

Arthur Darrell, the man addressed, got up suddenly and moved into the lamplight.

"Rot, my boy!" he said, with great gentleness. "This heat is getting on your nerves. Feel equal to walking up and down for a spell? That's right. Of course I'm sorry to leave you out here. But you'll get on all right. And after all, it isn't for ever. You will be home on leave before many years."

He threw a kindly arm round Cheviot's shoulders and led him into the shadow beyond the lamplight.

A brief silence followed his words. Then the younger man, a mere boy, began to talk again with more force and less emotion.

"And this brute who succeeds you. I detest the thought of his taking up his

quarters here. He nearly made me sick with that beastly scent he uses. The ante-room reeked of it to-night. And the stuff he smokes. Ye gods! And then look at his get-up, his eye-glass, his drawl! The fellows christened him 'The Honourable' directly they saw the way he walked. I never saw such swagger in my life. Add to that that he is a sneery, cold-blooded beast with an absolutely wicked temper, and you have him complete."

"Speak lower, you idiot! He'll hear you!" muttered Darrell. "Can't you see his window is wide open? Let's go back!"

Burford, the new captain, sitting reading in his room, heard the voices, the one sharp and distinct, the other cautiously lowered, and a smile touched his good-looking, languid countenance. He was a fine specimen of mankind, this man who had just been so unflatteringly described by one of his future subalterns—tall, erect, muscular. But there undoubtedly was a species of studied ease about his bearing, a conscious, accentuated swagger, that could not fail to mar the pleasant suggestion of his man's strength:

The same trait was perceptible in his face: The features were straight and regular, but the man's expression was inanimate, stony, and there was a settled sneer about the clean-shaven mouth that would have been sufficient to prejudice the most impartial observer. He still wore his mess-dress, and an eye-glass suspended on a slender gold chain dangled in front. A diamond stud shone in his shirt above the scarlet cummerbund, and he wore a lady's ring, a hoop of diamonds, on his left hand. A strong scent of violets pervaded the room above the tobacco-smoke which the heavy air failed to stir.

Presently, absolute silence reigning, he

rose and stepped to the window. He saw the elder of the two officers on the verandah, leaning against a pillar in the lamplight, and, catching his eye, he beckoned to him.

Darrell stole up noiselessly: "Cheviot's asleep," he whispered.

"Ah, good!" said Burford, in a soft drawl: "Come into my room and have a drink. I've got some Persian sherbet here."

Darrell entered. The light on his face showed it to be ghastly pale, and his companion instantly noted the fact.

"Sit down, my dear fellow," he said, in a tone of gentle insistence: "You seem to be a bit bowled over by the heat. A drink will do you good, don't you know?"

Darrell sat down, but an instant later he half sprang from the chair, clutching Burford's arm. "Oh, my heart!" he gasped, and sank down again in a fearful paroxysm of agony.

Burford bent over him and held him up in silence. Darrell's spasmodic breathing was terrible to hear. When a few seconds later his muscles relaxed and Burford laid him back, his lips were blue.

Burford moved away and poured some neat brandy into a glass. This he proceeded to administer to Darrell in unbroken silence.

Darrell took a gulp, choked over it, and came to life with a quivering smile. He lay still for some moments. Then, "Thanks!" he whispered. "I feel better. Sorry to have given you the trouble."

"Weak heart?" suggested Burford, in an emotionless drawl. "Beastly nuisance for you."

"Angina," said Darrell. "These attacks are maddening while they last. But it's all over now. And I don't fancy I shall have many more of them. The doctor tells me I may get my marching orders at any moment. So they have kicked me out of the Service as medically unfit."

"Rough luck!" observed Burford.

"Not altogether," said Darrell thoughtfully. "You see—I am not afraid of death. I was once. But I know better now. And when my marching orders come I shall find it as easy as sitting down to breakfast." He paused, looking up at Burford with a faint smile: "I don't know why I tell you this. You have seen dying men before now, I daresay."

Burford's attention was fully occupied for the moment with the polishing of his eye-glass. He adjusted it finally and

surveyed his companion with its assistance. "If there is anything I can do for you here—in any line," he said deliberately, "I hope you will not hesitate to let me know."

Darrell sat up slowly. "That is very good of you," he said. "You mean actually that?"

"Actually that," responded Burford: "It is mainly what I asked you in here to say. Please consider me absolutely at your service."

Darrell hesitated for a moment. "I hope you won't consider it an abuse of your good-nature if I take advantage of it," he said.

"I usually mean what I say," remarked Burford, smiling faintly:

"Thank you," Darrell said gravely: "Then will you, as a friend, keep an eye on my young brother-in-law, Cheviot? My going home will leave him very much to his own devices. He isn't used to it. I've always looked after him till now. And he's a good little chap, but he's only twenty-two. He might get up to mischief, you know. Should you mind? Am I asking too much?"

Burford was absently staring beyond him, and the cynicism had deepened on his face. After a pause he turned his eyes upon Darrell. "You are very confiding," he said. "I may be any degree of scoundrel, don't you know?"

Darrell laughed a little and held out his hand. "I'm not afraid of that," he said:

The hand Burford extended was limp and cold. "I will do my best for the youngster," he said: "So he is your brother-in-law?"

"Yes. My wife's young half-brother. My wife died two years ago. That boy has been my best friend ever since. He helped me through the worst time I have ever known."

Captain Burford rose suddenly and went to the window. He stood there without speaking, and to Darrell there came a sudden conviction that somewhere very far beneath this man's languid exterior there throbbed a goading, intolerable pain.

He got up with an effort and joined him at the window. Burford was leaning forward slightly. He seemed to be watching something in the darkness beyond the verandah. As Darrell reached his side the heavy deadness of the atmosphere stirred, and a faint puff of air rustled through scorched leaves. The night was slowly sinking out into the still hush that heralded the dawn of another pitiless day.

"One feels inclined to envy that Persian chap his philosophy who in the last extremities of siege wrote up on his palace walls: 'This, too, will pass,' on such a night as this," said Darrell.

It was a chance shot in the dark at sympathy for an unknown trouble. As such Burford understood it. For solitude and silence make men comrades.

"You have your faith to back you up," he said, with a faint sneer. "That, you know, is an advantage."

"Yes," Darrell said quietly. "It is an advantage that the unbelievers can never estimate. My wife died of a broken heart, because her sister, her twin, married a brute who deserted her within a week of their marriage. My wife never got over the shock of it. She was not made to bear trouble, and they had been everything to each other, she and her sister. She died two years ago. The child was a few weeks old. They went together."

Darrell paused. He had spoken with considerable effort. Burford was leaning against the window-frame, facing him.

"Bad for you," he said.

"Yes," Darrell went on. "We had only been married a year. Yet," he smiled suddenly, "now, at the end of the journey, I should be the last to curse my luck."

"You are better off than I am," Burford said, with a faint tinge of genuine feeling in his voice.

"I can easily believe it," Darrell replied. He moved impulsively and laid his hand on the other's shoulder. "We take things awfully hard," he said, "but, really, it's not worth it. Forgive me if I trespass on private ground. But it seems to me a hard thing to bury trouble, when it takes half the kick out of you to speak of it. You will never see me again, so you won't misjudge my motive for saying this."

There was a pause. Then very gently and deliberately Burford stepped out of reach.

"Certainly not, my dear sir," he said. "You are generous, but I will not tax your generosity to that extent. You have not the least idea what you are doing in offering me a helping hand. And I think I will not enlighten you. Believe me, I appreciate your goodness of heart none the less."

There was a strong suggestion of womanliness in the quiet speech, but Darrell saw at once that the refusal was intended to be final. There was a short silence. Then he held out his hand.

"I think it is getting a bit cooler,"

he said, "and as I have to be off in a few hours, I'll go and try to get a sleep while I have time. Good-night!"

With a clasp of the hand they parted.

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THE PASSING OF DARRELL.

BURFORD awoke in the morning from easy slumber to a sharp call from the open window of his room. He roused himself to see young Cheviot come striding up to him with a white, horror-stricken face. "For Heaven's sake, wake up!" he implored. "There's something wrong with Arthur. Can you come and look at him? He always wakes all right. But this morning—"

He broke off. Burford was already on his feet and walking along the verandah. Two charpoys had been placed at the further end. On one of these lay Darrell, asleep—his eyes closed and a still smile on his lips, one arm under his head, and his face slightly turned to the dawning.

Burford stood above him for a second, then bent and touched the sleeping face. Cheviot on the other side watched the action and looked at him eagerly. Burford bent lower, felt for the heart—lower still, listened intently. But he felt nothing, heard nothing, and the icy cold of the hand that hung carelessly down over the side of the charpoy banished all doubt. Darrell's marching orders had come with the morning. And without pain, without fear, he had obeyed the summons.

Burford looked up at Cheviot, who was watching dumbly. "I think you had better fetch a doctor," he said.

Cheviot stooped forward over the silent figure. "For Heaven's sake, say he isn't dead!" he whispered. "He is only sleeping more soundly than usual. Or is it a faint? He's had them before."

He gasped out the words.

Burford recognised the urgent necessity for getting him away.

"Go and get a doctor," he said very quietly. "I will stay here."

His calm manner took effect upon Cheviot. He straightened himself without another word, stood a second looking down at the quiet face on the pillow, then turned and crept noiselessly away.

After many minutes Burford stood up: But he did not move away. He remained looking down at the dead man's cold face, with a little awe, a little wonder, and a very

great reverence on his own. And as he looked, the dormant conviction of a faith he had long since cast aside began to stir beneath the iron strength of his scepticism.

Was this the death from which men shrank in anguished, unreasoning fear? Was this the dread, unknown force from which they strove with such piteous futility to escape? Was this the end?

Surely, in Cheviot's agitated words, this man was only sleeping more soundly than usual. Mortal though it was, the resurrection glory was already on his face. Doubtless through his faith he had won to peace. And to the man who stood beside the sleeper, there came, as it were by revelation, the certainty that that faith, grand in its simplicity, splendid in its unspoken vindication, is the very element of reality, the complement unseen and hidden of men's unfinished lives.

Darrell's own words: "Now, at the end of the journey, I should be the last to curse my luck," flashed through his mind. And he knew that Darrell had spoken the truth. Burford was conscious of a feeling that was almost envy of this man who had won so infinitely much more than he had seemed to lose. Pity held no place whatever in his thoughts.

He turned at last and moved silently away, with a feeling that the ground beneath his feet was holy. For the shadow of a great peace shrouded the quiet corner where Darrell lay asleep.

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BURFORD'S CHARGE.

THREE volleys discharged into the heavy evening air—the notes of a bugle wailing "Last Post" over the sun-baked plains—an open grave—an empty gun-carriage—and then quick march away to the strains of "The Old Brigade." And it was all over—the life that had throbbed away at dawn—the grave filled in before the brief twilight had died out of the sky—and only the band, pulsing in the distance, to fling back a mocking echo of mourning for a soul departed.

To Cheviot, crushed and unnerved by sudden sorrow, the music was the most intolerable part of the whole performance, and when it abruptly changed from pathos to gaiety his endurance utterly failed him. He broke away from the returning procession, too stricken to care who noticed, and went back—back to the mound they

were banking up in a corner of the English cemetery, there to pace up and down in impotent anguish of soul till the work was finished, and he was left alone in the darkness.

And then he threw himself down by the grave and flung out passionate arms over the senseless earth, yielding himself wholesale to the overpowering sense of loss that pressed him so hard. He was but a boy, and this man had been more than a brother to him. So for hours he lay, utterly broken down, taking no count of time. And for hours he was left undisturbed.

It was hard on midnight when an officer strolled into the cemetery and up to the newly-made grave. Cheviot did not hear the leisurely footfall, or, hearing, paid no attention. He was past caring whether the bitterness of his soul were witnessed by a fellow-being or not. And so Burford approached unheeded, and, bending, touched his shoulder.

"I say, you know," he murmured, "you must come away now. There's no sense in stopping here all night."

Cheviot did not stir a finger. He had parted with his self-control too completely to recover it at a word.

Burford went on in his soft voice that was like a woman's: "Mere sentiment, don't you know. Besides, it's beastly dark. And what good does it do?"

Cheviot stumbled slowly to his feet and stared at the new captain with dazed, uncertain eyes.

"Oh, can't you fellows leave me alone?" he said heavily. "You, is it? At least you might keep away. It's nothing to you. What do you mean by coming after me?" with sudden fierceness.

Burford shrugged his shoulders and took the boy's arm. "Come away, Cheviot!" he said, in a persuasive drawl. "There's nothing to keep you here."

Cheviot turned sharply to the dim mound at his feet. "Oh, my dear fellow!" he suddenly whispered brokenly. "I never said good-bye!"

Burford spoke again gently, deliberately: "That'll be all right, dear boy. You bet he understands."

Cheviot made an involuntary, ineffectual attempt to rid himself of the hand that held his arm. There was a something like satire in the man's tone that struck and jarred upon him even then.

"Come, Cheviot!" Burford said softly.

"We must be getting back." And then quite suddenly Cheviot yielded and suffered himself to be led away.

Burford led him into the smoking-room and guided him to a sofa. He issued a few orders to Cheviot's native servant, who appeared on the scene to attend his master. Then he sat down opposite Cheviot and cocked his eye-glass at the disordered figure. He himself was faultlessly exact in his attire. The lamplight flared on the glittering red and gold of his mess-dress, on the diamond that flashed in his shirt, on his pale, cynical face, with its cold, heavy eyes.

"Now, my dear fellow," he said, when Cheviot's bearer reappeared with a tray of refreshments, "you will break your fast, eh? Have a drink first."

The soft drawl brought Cheviot to a consciousness of what was expected of him. He sat up, collecting his scattered faculties with an effort.

Burford selected a cigar, and proceeded to take his ease across three chairs.

"We may as well have the punkah," he remarked. "Here, you nigger! Find your donkey-brother, and tell him to stir his ugly carcase, and give us a little air. Fire away, Cheviot! You want some food, don't you know. Don't mind me."

Cheviot pulled himself together, and made a gallant effort to eat something. "You'll make me sick if you smoke that beastly tobacco of yours," he said, after a pause.

"Ah! It's a strong brand. Very good flavour, though. You shall try one by-and-by."

"Indeed I won't," said Cheviot rudely, a reply which astonished the recumbent captain so much that he sat up and dropped his eye-glass to look at him. Clearly his charge was feeling better. "I daresay you are right," he said at length. "Bed is the best place for you to-night."

Cheviot made no response, and nothing more was said on either side till he had finished his refreshment and got up to go to his room. Then he hesitated, turned to Burford, who was waiting to light up, and extended a reluctant hand:

"Much obliged!" he said curtly, turning very red.

Was he over-ready to read a sneer in the grey eyes of "The Honourable Burford," as a wit at the mess had christened him, as he made this scanty acknowledgment? Or did it actually exist?

"Don't mention it," drawled Burford, with a limp handshake. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!" returned Cheviot, turning abruptly. He added, pausing at the door with his back turned on the offensive patronage that so jarred on him: "Thanks very much!"

And Burford smiled quietly to himself as he lighted a villainously strong cigar.

■ ■ ■

A WOMAN'S PORTRAIT.

INDIA is the land of the unexpected and the sudden. Men live their lives from day to day with each morning the possibility that the evening may find them in their graves. The scenes are constantly changing, and death cuts short many friendships. Memories are brief in consequence, and vacant places are very swiftly filled.

By the time the rains had begun to swamp the land Darrell's name had ceased to be mentioned even by those men who had been in daily association with him for years. Cheviot from the first never uttered it, but he was the only one with whom this fact was not a sign of speedy forgetfulness.

Cheviot was, as it were, under the lash of the severest discipline he had ever undergone, and he took it fighting. He was feverish and he was unreasonable. He quarreled fiercely whenever opportunity arose. He took offence where none was intended.

He hated the Honourable Burford, and made no secret of the fact. Yet Burford was generally at his elbow, critical, satirical, seldom interfering with him, but always conveying a distinct impression of his readiness to do so should occasion arise. Cheviot struggled for some time to shake him off, but was finally obliged to abandon the project. He detested the man all the more savagely for his persistence. But Burford's determination remained unshaken.

At the mess Burford was not particularly popular, but he was treated with respect. In a sarcastic and exceedingly unpleasant fashion he was absolutely capable of holding his own. And his complete self-control at all times gave him a character for mercilessness which was perhaps not quite a fair impression. Others acted on impulse. Burford calculated every step he took. His manner to natives was overbearing and insolent to the last degree.

And here there was inconsistency. For on one occasion he was seen by a brother officer to pick a native urchin out of the

gutter, whither he had been sent sprawling by a whirling dog-cart, feel all over the naked brown body for broken bones, and, discovering none, release him with a rupee in his small paw. This presented an entirely different aspect of the Honourable's character.

Burford also had the reputation for being a woman-hater. Somebody suggested and afterwards alleged as positive fact that he had suffered a cruel disappointment at no very distant period in his career at the hands of a woman. An incident which occurred a few weeks after his arrival served to strengthen this idea.

Rothsay, a cheery youth whose facility for digesting snubs was traditional, paid Burford an unsolicited visit one night after mess. Finding no one about, he crept along the verandah to the window of Burford's bedroom and looked in. What he saw surprised him very much, and showed him in a second that his presence there was an intrusion. For Burford was seated at his table with his head bowed upon something that looked like a photograph, and the stricken misery of the man's attitude revealed to the astonished spectator a something that he had never dreamt of in connection with that social iceberg, Burford.

Rothsay tip-toed away again and recounted his experience to a chosen few in the billiard-room of the mess, with the result that quite suddenly Burford, the soft-voiced, retiring captain, became an object of general attention among the subalterns of the regiment.

He was the recipient of many and various anonymous lovelorn ditties. Trifling gifts of an amorous nature were showered upon him from unknown quarters; one day a pathetic sketch on a post-card of himself kneeling distractedly at the feet of a lady who wore a mask, another a few dead flowers, and on another occasion an ingenious little Cupid fashioned in clay. Burford decked his writing-table with the emblems of love and asked no questions.

It was at this time that Cheviot, who had been working up to a pitch of insolence that none but Burford would have endured, committed the crowning offence. It took place one Sunday afternoon in the beginning of August:

Cheviot and a merry little officer, by name Villiers, were knocking the balls about in the billiard-room when Burford strolled in, puffing vile tobacco-smoke before him,

and shedding violet perfume behind him as he moved, and seated himself to watch the very desultory sort of game that was going forward. Cheviot, who was in an unamiable frame of mind, promptly flung down his cue and tramped to the door.

The insolence of the action was too palpable to be ignored, and Villiers, without a moment's thought, bounced after him with a sharp: "Come back, Cheviot! What the dickens do you mean by behaving in this way? What's the matter with you?"

Cheviot went back, but not to resume the game. Having completely lost his temper, he proceeded to give vent to his savagery in a free and generous fashion that silenced Villiers with sheer astonishment. He was not very intelligible, but he gave both his listeners clearly to understand that he considered he had been under supervision long enough, that he refused to be dogged by Burford at every turn, that if he chose to go to the dogs he would go without interference, and finally, if anyone wanted to fight, let them come on.

He steadily worked himself up to white heat by this process, and when Burford leisurely rose and approached him with a casual: "My good fellow, why this violence? So wearing, don't you know," he whirled round on him with a fierce oath and struck him heavily on the mouth. Thus unreasonably and childishly did Cheviot decide to fling away his commission for the pleasure of a fisticuff.

But in attacking Burford he made a mistake to which succeeding events at once testified. He was not in the least prepared for the promptitude with which that usually sleepy individual seized him, as he proceeded in mad fury to follow up the assault, and neatly tripped him backwards over his knee.

Taken by surprise, he struck out blindly, but his fists fought empty air. Burford, with more skill than force, avoided a second blow, and deliberately pinned the whirling arms behind his assailant's back. He held him fast, and Cheviot was helpless. Realising this, he ceased abruptly to struggle.

"Let me go!" he gasped breathlessly.

Burford instantly lowered him to the floor and released him.

"Certainly," he said contemptuously. "I have not the smallest desire to detain you." And turning away, he covered his mouth with his handkerchief.

Cheviot picked himself up and bolted.

Burford glanced at Villiers and remarked drily: "A very creditable performance, eh?"

Villiers noted the blood-soaked handkerchief with dismay. "He is mad," he said. "Or else he has been drinking."

Burford shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, no! I had to pull him up yesterday. A trifling matter. And he has lusted for my blood ever since." He strolled to the door and paused, still mopping his cut lip. Then he said with great deliberation: "You will be good enough to recollect that this show was a strictly private one, Villiers," and passed out, leaving Villiers staring after him in dumb astonishment.

■ ■ ■

AFTER THE INSULT.

THAT evening Cheviot sat long in his room with his head in his hands, and contemplated his probable future with a keen though shrinking anticipation. He did not doubt that disgrace lay before him. He knew that for every indulgence of sinful nature there is a price to pay.

He knew, or thought he knew, the man in whose hands he had thus recklessly placed himself. And he entertained not the faintest hope of mercy from him. He was in Burford's power, and he did not for a second doubt that Burford would wield it to the uttermost. An unworthy wonder even crossed his mind if Burford had been working from the outset towards this end. Such was his hatred for the man who had taken his dead friend's place.

He pondered over the miserable situation for hours, till at last, despair getting the better of him, his spirit broke, and the old, incessant ache, against which he had fought long and fruitlessly, returned upon him tenfold, and filled his soul with the anguish of those who mourn their dead.

And with it, inseparable from it, came the homesick longing which he had never learnt to stifle—the ache of the eyes and heart and brain for English fields and English breezes, for the dear *dolce domum* that had ever been the desired haven of his boyhood's days, and all the tender sweetness of that pleasant land.

He sat and pictured to himself the English cornfields ripe to harvest, heard the continuous music of the reaping-machine, saw the glint of the golden corn as it fell and lay in the sunshine. How would it be at home, he wondered, when the story of his disgrace reached them? His mother, how would she take it?

And his sister—he had a half-sister who

was a nurse at Simla—what would she say when she knew, she who had been his willing slave and comrade during all his early years? Well, it was his own doing.

It was no good sitting there squirming: Above all things it seemed necessary to him that he should show a bold, defiant front to the outside world, during the humiliating ordeal which he was quite convinced he would be called upon to face.

And so weary, harassed, and exceedingly miserable, Cheviot rose and left his room with the intention of showing himself and courting arrest with as great effrontery as he could muster. It was in this mood that he encountered Burford in the passage and drew himself up with a jerk.

Burford stopped. "I was just coming to speak to you, Cheviot," he observed frigidly. "Can you spare me two minutes?"

Cheviot paused very unwillingly. "What is it?" he said gruffly.

"Come into my room," said Burford.

And Cheviot followed him silently. The light there revealed to him the fact that Burford's countenance was purple and swollen about the mouth after a fashion extremely suggestive of prize-fighting. It was a disfigurement that would last for some days to come, and Cheviot was dismayed by the discovery. For despite his sullen aspect, Cheviot was feeling particularly tame.

Burford closed the door and confronted him.

"Now, my dear sir, doesn't it occur to you that you have been making rather a fool of yourself?" he said, in a tone of gentle suggestion.

Cheviot was silent.

Burford waited a few moments with his eyes on Cheviot's face. Suddenly he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder and spoke in a soothing drawl:

"Come now! Is it fever, or what? I want to understand your machinery, don't you know. And it's so awfully complicated."

Cheviot threw up his head with the action of a jibbing horse.

"When you've sent me to the puppy-dogs you'll be able to try your hand on someone, else's machinery," he said, with a bitter laugh.

"Eh? What exactly do you mean?" Burford regarded him with puzzled inquiry: "You do not, I suppose, contemplate sending in your papers?"

"You bet I do if I get the chance," said Cheviot, with a dreary effort to keep up appearances. "It's easier to walk downstairs than to be kicked down, and much nicer."

"Eh? Why?" Burford leveled his eye-glass at him with a deliberation that provoked Cheviot to the old, chafing irritation.

"Why?" he exclaimed impatiently. "Oh, you try it, Captain Burford, and see which you like better."

Burford remained serenely unruffled. He even smiled faintly, despite his battered countenance, as if there were something in the situation that amused him:

"And now," he said quietly, "will you tell me what possible pleasure you imagine it could be to me to send you to the puppy-dogs, as you so gracefully express it?"

Cheviot started and stared. "I don't know what you mean," he said shortly.

"No? Think it over. I merely want to know why you should suppose I should be doing myself a good turn by ruining you."

Cheviot stood dumfounded for a space of several seconds. At last, "I—don't want you to let me off," he blurted out, turning crimson: "Why should you?"

Burford did not reply. Certainly if his aim had been to humiliate this refractory youngster, he could not have chosen a more effectual method.

"I can spare you now," he remarked pleasantly, after a short pause, "unless you have anything more to say."

Cheviot hesitated. Then, "Yes. I'm sorry I struck you. I beg your pardon!" He snapped out the words as if they hurt him:

And then for the first time he saw something of the real man under the perpetual mask of satire: "You may reserve your apology till I ask for it," said Burford shortly:

And Cheviot flung round on his heel and went back to his room:

■ ■ ■

IN FEVER'S GRIP

A FORTNIGHT later the curse of the plains stalked ironshod through the land. Enteric, dysentery, and malaria divided empire in the hospital, and day by day claimed fresh victims. The dank heaviness of the rain-soaked atmosphere breathed death to the English boys who

had come up smiling from the pitiless heat of the dry season:

Men of the sickly Cockney breed went down before the pestilence like leaves before wind: Patients were discharged from hospital in the earliest stages of convalescence to make way for those who daily sickened in the barracks. Hospital orderlies were run off their legs in the vain endeavour to keep pace with the mighty strides of disease: In the bazaar, natives died deaths strange and ghastly, and no one whispered the word cholera: It was the worst season that had been known for years.

And it was then, while the rains were drenching the tortured earth with healing, unceasing downpour, and the hospital was filled to overflowing with fever-stricken men, that Cheviot also fell a victim to fever:

He kept it to himself, holding it off, defying it, till he felt half-dead with the effort. As was natural, he failed at last, and failed badly.

One night he appeared at mess looking so wretchedly ill that the colonel noticed it:

"What's wrong with you, Cheviot?" he asked. "A touch of fever?"

"I'm perfectly well, sir," said Cheviot doggedly.

The colonel looked incredulous: "What do you think, O'Connor?" he said, turning to the regimental surgeon.

O'Connor was a gusty, tempestuous person, as Irish as his name. He turned round at the question and glanced at young Cheviot. Then he seized him by the shoulders.

"What do you mean by turning up here when you ought to be in bed?" he demanded: "Back you go, my friend! I'll have no nonsense. So quick march! And when you get there go straight to bed."

"I won't," said Cheviot shortly: "I tell you I'm all right."

"And I tell you that that's the blackest lie you ever stained your immortal soul with," returned O'Connor vigorously: "Come! I'll have you obey orders. You trot back to your quarters like a dear fellow, and I'll come and dose you presently."

"Permit me to offer my services," said Burford, sauntering up:

"Think I can't manage him?" said O'Connor. "All right. Take him along: I'll come round presently. And if he doesn't behave himself, by the gods, we'll peg him down and drench him."

Cheviot turned about, red and angry, and departed, Burford stalking at his heels.

Since his bitter humiliation of a fortnight before, Cheviot's hatred for the Honourable Burford had increased tenfold.

The man's contemptuous toleration was as insufferable as his incessant patronage, and the consciousness that he was under an obligation to him galled Cheviot unspeakably. He had listened in silent shame to Burford's plausible explanation with regard to his disfigurement, had heard him coolly describe the exact manner in which his horse had tossed up his head and caught his rider's face, and from his soul he loathed the overbearing leniency that had given him another chance.

He returned to his quarters, refused Burford's assistance, and shut himself into his room. Half-an-hour later Burford looked in unceremoniously, and found him sitting at the table with his head in his hands, and a sheet of notepaper before him. Burford at once assumed an air of authority.

He went up to Cheviot. "Why are you not in bed, may I ask?"

Cheviot raised his head. He was shivering violently. "I want to send a message—a wire. I shall be past writing to-morrow. And it must go. Only my head is so infernally swimmy I can't hold the pen straight. And—and—" He made a fruitless grab after self-control, strove to recover himself, failed—and laid his head down on his arms and cried like a child.

"Don't be a fool now," urged Burford, in a motherly tone. "You've got beyond yourself, don't you know. I'll write this precious message for you, a dozen if you like. But you undress and go to bed. Come, now!"

He paused. Cheviot did not move. Burford continued, conciliatory, even tender. "Don't give way like this, dear boy. You make yourself worse. Besides, it's so confoundedly childish, don't you know. And"—his invariable afterthought—"what good does it do?"

In some unaccountable fashion the gentle reasoning reminded Cheviot of his mother. There came again to him the swish of the falling corn, the song of larks, and the gay trill of chaffinches in the hedges, the slumberous hum in the insect-laden air, the fragrant scent of the summer fields. He groaned aloud.

The soft, womanly voice went on: "Get up and let me help you. You will feel better in bed. Come, Cheviot!"

Cheviot stumbled up with his hand over his eyes. The English scene had somehow

become confused with a fresh-dug grave and a black night with the growl of thunder far away. And the dread loneliness was over all. He swayed a little. His senses seemed to totter on the edge of a great emptiness.

Burford suddenly dropped his coaxing drawl and took the boy by the arms.

"I will have no more of this," he said sternly. "You will go to bed at once, and be rational. Do you understand?"

Cheviot stared at him with dawning comprehension. "But that message?" he objected feebly.

"I will write that when you are in bed."

And Cheviot submitted without another word.

"Now then," said Burford quietly, when at length he laid himself uneasily down, "what do you want me to write?"

"Anything will do," murmured Cheviot, "so long as she comes."

"Eh? Who is it? Where do you want to send it?"

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know! It is to go to my sister Kathleen. She is at Simla. 'Miss Vere, care of Mrs. Weston, Home Bungalow, Simla.'"

Burford gave a sudden start. He did not speak for a few seconds. When he did it was with the old, studied gentleness: "But, my dear fellow, you can't mean to ask her to come from Simla to this fever-stricken place?"

"Yes. Why not? She's a nurse, and knows all about it. I'm sure she'll come."

"But, my dear Cheviot, it's not fit for any woman—this place."

"She knows all about it," repeated Cheviot restlessly. "It won't hurt her. She spent an autumn in the plains two years ago, nursing a chap who died."

"He died, eh? What was his name? Can you remember?" Burford bent suddenly forward, watching the boy closely.

Cheviot stared back with hazy surprise. "Whose name? Oh, Jack Hilyard you mean. Yes, he died."

"Ah!" said Burford thoughtfully.

He asked no more, and very soon after, O'Connor arrived. He examined his patient, quieted him down brusquely when he began to talk restlessly about the telegram he wished sent, and finally turned round to Burford muttering: "He mustn't be left."

"I will stay with him," said Burford.

O'Connor nodded approval. "Send for me if he gets worse. What's this about a telegram he's so unhappy about?"

"To his sister. He wants to send for her. She is at Simla."

O'Connor glanced at Cheviot, who was tossing feverishly. "Better send," he decided briefly.

Burford passed a lively night. Cheviot soon became delirious. He raved of English scenes and English sounds, of the gleam of the sea with the sun upon it, of the roll and splash of the long breakers on the shores of that enchanted land. He had many illusions, some fantastic, some violent, but through them all the consciousness of Burford's presence was upon him. He detested the man, yet leant on his support with sure reliance. Not once did he fail to recognise him.

O'Connor raced round at an early hour, and found him dozing restlessly. Burford, alert, watchful, gentle as a woman, was at his side.

"I'll get the chief to detail you for this job," O'Connor said. "You were cut out for a nurse. What made you mistake your calling in this way?"

The Honourable Burford merely sneered superciliously by way of reply.

A couple of days later he was the general subject of conversation at the mess. For Cheviot had gone down into the Valley of the Shadow in weariness of soul, and this man by sheer strength and determination had dragged him back—back to the old life of strife and desire, with only a dim impression of that Hallowed Land at the portals of which his feet had lingered. A doubtful service possibly, as Burford cynically remarked to O'Connor.

"You had better get him to help you in the hospital," said Rothesay, also to O'Connor, while Burford was under discussion. "You'll want help pretty soon. There's cholera only ten miles away."

O'Connor turned on him with violence. "You chattering, hare-brained fool, I don't believe it!" he said angrily.

"Man alive, I don't care what you do. But it's fact, and we're in for it. 'A bloomin' picnic of death's heads,' I heard one Tommy say. They've got the blue funk at the barracks, got it bad. And the chief is like a jelly-fish this morning."

O'Connor flung round fiercely to depart. But something he caught sight of in Rothesay's face arrested the oath on his lips.

"Sure, we needn't go to the barracks to look for blue funk," he remarked, as he went away,

THE NURSE'S SECRET.

"NO," said Miss Vere gently, as she turned her horse's head towards Simla: "I am very sorry, Mr. Owen: I can't even think of it."

"Oh, come, nurse!" protested Miss Vere's companion: "You aren't going to cut me to that extent?"

"I have no choice," she said, and there was a ring of distress in her low voice.

The young man beside her heard it, and instantly dropped the subject.

"See that break in the clouds, nurse?" he said briskly. "It's going to clear: Jove! How good the pines smell! I could live to a hundred here."

Miss Vere smiled in a relieved way: He was invariably considerate, this friend of hers, and it hurt her to snub him, even though the snubbing were quite unavoidable: For this great, freckled fellow who lazed about Simla for want of something better to do, had fallen in love with the quiet, sweet Irish girl who had come as a nurse to the Indian paradise among the pines and remained as a friend.

Though courteous ever, Kathleen had given him distinctly to understand from the very outset that his attentions were no pleasure or gratification to her. But Owen was accustomed to having his own way, and he had persisted in his determination to win his heart's desire.

He was rich, he was young, he was confident. He had no intention of letting himself be baffled. At the same time he did not mean to distress her by his importunity. He loved her enough to put her happiness before his own.

And so he talked gaily and carelessly on indifferent topics as they rode back to Simla, and the shadow passed gradually from Miss Vere's grey eyes, the constraint from her manner.

They found quite a breakfast-party gathered in the Home Bungalow, which at that time owned as its mistress Mrs. Weston, Kathleen Vere's former patient and present friend and hostess. There were Bobby Fraser, one of his Excellency's aides; the Reverend Jasper Caldicott, one of the most popular men in Simla; and Mrs. Weston's young brother Bernard Elton, a conceited puppy of eighteen, who was a perpetual bore to himself and everybody else.

Conversation was running on the exceptional unhealthiness of the season in the plains when Miss Vere and her companion entered:

"They say it is the worst wet season they have had for years," Caldicott was saying. "The death-roll is terrific."

"By George, yes. They've got it hottest at Budhpore, somewhere in the Central Provinces," said Bobby. "They are dying like flies in a jam-pot there. Can't stop it either. There's cholera as well as fever."

"Budhpore!" said Miss Vere quickly.

"That's where your brother is stationed, isn't it?" queried young Elton. "Bad look-out for him, nurse."

"Shut up!" growled Owen, poking the youth with his elbow.

And Miss Vere looked at him with a little smile of gratitude. Later, alone with her friend Mrs. Weston, she owned her anxiety. "I think they would surely let me know if he were ill," she said. "Walter would insist on that. But I have not heard from him lately, and it worries me."

Mrs. Weston turned and put her arms impulsively about her friend. "Dear," she said very tenderly, "is that the only worry?" Then as Kathleen hesitated, "Forgive me. I could not help noticing, Kathleen dearest; you do care for him?"

There was a long pause. Then Kathleen spoke slowly, wearily:

"Mr. Owen and I are friends," she said. "We can never be anything more. No, Lucy, I do not care for him—in that way. There is—someone else."

"My darling!" The English girl's soft arms drew closer about Kathleen in a clasp of infinite sympathy.

Kathleen suddenly hid her face on Mrs. Weston's shoulder. "I ought to have told you before," she whispered. "Perhaps I should have told him, too. But, oh, it hurts me so to talk about it. Lucy, I am not—not—what you think me. I am a married woman."

"My darling!" the Englishwoman said again very softly, and there was silence. "Where is he?" she asked at length with some hesitation:

"I don't know. He left me. It was only a week after our wedding. I was left alone." The low voice faltered. "I came to India. My sister—my twin—was out here. She died not long after her baby was born. My trouble affected her terribly. She never really got over the pain of first hearing of it: Her husband, Arthur Darrell, is dead, too, now. He was very brave and strong—my mainstay through all that dreary time."

Kathleen paused. Mrs. Weston kissed her hair without speaking.

Presently she went on: "I am telling you my story in the Irish way, dearest. I can't talk about the great mistake beyond just telling you what it was."

"When I was quite a young girl I was engaged to a dear fellow I had known nearly all my life. He got into trouble and had to leave the country. For years I lost sight of him, and I took up nursing. Then I met Everard Vivian, the man who became my husband. He was very kind to me. I was unhappy and unsettled, and when he asked me to marry him I consented. I told him all about Jack. He said it had been mere girlish sentiment, and I fancy now he was right. I had loved Jack as a comrade; I did not then know that there was a deeper love."

"We were married very quietly. Even my brother Walter was not present. And we went to Italy. There I met—Jack. He was on his way home from this country for me, after nine years of silence. And then my husband made a great mistake. I don't say he had no reason for it. I loved Jack very much. I could not pretend he was nothing to me. He wanted to take me away. But Jack was taken suddenly ill, and he begged me not to leave him."

"My husband's regiment was stationed at that time at Gibraltar, and orders came unexpectedly for him to rejoin. Someone was ill, and he was wanted. He had to go, and I—I stayed with Jack. I was wrong, I know. But I thought Jack was dying."

"My husband left me. He wrote two days after, and said—oh, I can't tell you what he said! But after I got that letter I—sent him back my wedding-ring and all the things he had given me, and it was all over. Jack got better, and I came to India to my sister. Afterwards Jack came to India. He had a tea-plantation in the south. But he fell with malaria directly he got out. And I went and nursed him again. That, too, of course was wrong. But I could not leave him to die alone. He died. And I went back to my sister. And that is all."

Kathleen lifted her face from Mrs. Weston's shoulder. Her eyes were dry and bright. "You see," she said, "my husband did not trust me. He knew I was fond of Jack. He did not understand, and I was too hurt—too proud—to explain."

"But—darling," Mrs. Weston hesitated a little, "you did love your husband?"

Kathleen turned her face away. "No one will ever know how much," she said.

"And—you do not know where he is?"

"No, I heard that he had left his old regiment. But I do not know where he is, or even if he lives. It wouldn't help me to know. I could not go to him."

"Oh, Kathleen! He is your husband, remember!"

"I know," the Irish girl said very gently.

"But, dear, I could not go back to him unless he sent and asked me. He made that impossible. I might forgive him. I do. But I could not—I could not—" with a sudden thrill of anguish—"go to him and perhaps be turned away."

"Kathleen, no man could be so base as that."

"You don't know," Kathleen said, with a hard sob. "He is gentle as a woman outside. But in reality he is merciless and hard as iron."

The entrance of a native servant with a telegram put an end to their talk. Kathleen took it and opened it. She turned almost immediately and handed it to her friend. "I must go at once," she said.

The message was short and to the point—

Cheviot down with malaria. Condition critical.—O'CONNOR, Surgeon.

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AN IMPORTUNATE LOVER.

THAT evening Kathleen Vere was sitting alone in the shaded lamplight of Mrs.

Weston's drawing-room, when someone rapped smartly at the door. She sat up slightly startled, and Owen popped his freckled visage into the room with a cheery: "It's only I, nurse. May I come in?"

Kathleen jumped up. Owen walked in jauntily. He was always cheerful.

"Now," he said, "why have you diddled me in this way, I want to know?"

Owen was in evening dress. He looked as if he had come direct from a ballroom, as in fact he had.

"You shouldn't have come," said Kathleen, giving him her hand as he seemed to expect it.

"Shouldn't I? Well, it's done now. And I want to talk to you rather badly. May I sit down? Or is that naughty, too?" He looked at her quizzically, then suddenly dropped his chaffing tone and led her into the lamplight. "I say, nurse, you have been crying. This won't do, you know. What is it?"

"Kathleen's lips quivered, and he drew her instantly to a sofa. "Sit down, mavourneen!" he said gently. "And I'll tell you

how I come to be here. I've been messing about for ages at Viceregal Lodge, waiting for you. I knew you wouldn't dance, but I happen to be particularly good at sitting out. And then your pal Mrs. Weston turned up without you, and I saw you meant to diddle me out of seeing you again. Horrid mean of you, nurse, I must say. But that by the way. Her Excellency asked for you, too. I just waited to hear Mrs. Weston say she had left you behind. Then I sloped. And—here I am."

He turned to look at her after having examined all the ornaments on a cabinet at her side. Kathleen had recovered herself. She smiled at him.

"I had a telegram this morning from Budhpore," she said irrelevantly. "My brother is down with malaria. I am very anxious about him. I leave here to-morrow."

"Going down to the plains? You? Not really!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, really. I have to be at Kalka by half-past three to-morrow afternoon. I am going to start from here at six."

There was a pause.

"I wonder if you have any idea what the plains are like this time of year?" said Owen, presently.

"Yes, I have tried them before."

He raised his eyebrows. "Splendid pluck you have, nurse!" he said appreciatively. "But—you don't surely mean to go down to Budhpore alone?"

"Why, of course I do." Kathleen laughed a little. "If I am not old enough to take care of myself now I never shall be."

"You ought not to go alone," said Owen seriously. "Now look here, nurse," in a tone of persuasion, "you let me trot down to Budhpore for you. It will take me three days. By the time I get there your brother will be getting better. And I will bring him up here to you. How's that?"

Kathleen rose impulsively. "It is like you, generous, kind-hearted. But indeed I must go myself."

"All right," he said at once. "You know best. I won't worry you about that. But, nurse, I want to talk about another little matter you know of. It seems this will be my last opportunity for an indefinite period."

Kathleen drew back. "Please don't," she said intreatingly.

Owen looked rather blank. "But—I must," he said. "I can't leave it half-said as you made me this morning. Kathleen—darling, do you understand what it

means to me? I've been screwing up my courage to tell you ever since I met you. I love you, mavourneen, I love you, as no one ever loved you before. You do care, you must care, a little, too. I'll wait for you any length of time, my dearest. Only don't crush me utterly. It—it's shabby, isn't it, to take all and give—nothing?"

His voice faltered. He was very much in earnest.

Kathleen put out her hand to him impulsively. "Dear boy, don't!" she whispered. "I like you very much, love you even, but, ah, not in that way. Did I ever make you think I did? Forgive me then. I never meant it."

"Oh, you never encouraged me!" said Owen. "You've consistently snubbed me since the first day we met. But I suppose I thrive on snubs. For I've loved you from the very beginning, dear. I couldn't help myself. And," his tone was suddenly dogged, "I shall go on loving you, whatever you may say, all my life, till I go over the side, mavourneen, and then right on into eternity. It's the way I'm made."

He had taken her hands and was looking down at her with a deep, passionate tenderness that seemed to glorify his undeniably plain countenance. Kathleen saw, and the heart fainted within her.

She bowed her head. "Forgive me!" she tried to whisper, but the words stuck, and suddenly she was crying as she had not cried for years. It seemed as if this man's great love had melted the frozen fountain of her tears.

Owen was in terrible distress. "Don't, darling, don't!" he intreated, drawing her into his arms with a gentle insistence that ignored her effort to draw herself away from him. "You mustn't take it to heart like this. I'm a fool, a silly, blundering fool. It's all right, darling, all right. I understand—all about it. It's not your fault. You never gave me an atom of reason for imagining you could ever care the toss of a halfpenny for my lumping carcase. Don't know how I ever came to ask you such a thing. Don't cry, sweet! I'm not worth a single tear. It hurts me horribly to see you cry on my account. I'd rather be flogged at a cart-tail."

Kathleen grew calmer at last, and lifted her head from his breast. "I am so sorry," she said with an effort. "I am not quite myself to-night. I have been raking up old troubles that are better left alone. You—you are very good. That is why I

have always found it so difficult to be horrid to you. I was afraid of this. I tried not to meet you. But I couldn't cut you always. And—and——"

Owen drew her back to the sofa with great gentleness. There was something sublime in the man's utter self-forgetfulness at that moment.

"That'll be all right, dear," he said simply. "Don't let that trouble you. Forget I have made a fool of myself, and treat me just as a friend if you will be so good. You need not be afraid. I—understand."

"No, you don't," she said with a weary sigh. "That's just it. I ought to tell you."

Owen knelt down in front of her and took her hands in his. "Don't tell me a word, dear," he said, without a shade of emotion in voice or face. "I understand better than you think. There's another fellow, isn't there, with more brains and fewer inches than the great, awkward lout who has dared to make love to you with nothing but the size of his fist to recommend him? You needn't answer, I know all about it. If I look at you long enough I shall be able to give you the man's exact description, from the colour of his eyes to the name of his tailor. No, don't stop me, nurse. It is all just as it should be. But you're a lonely little soul, aren't you? You aren't going to throw me over entirely, eh? You'll spare me a few crumbs of friendship? Friends, even unwieldy lubbers like myself, come in useful, you know, sometimes."

"You are the best friend I have in the world," she said very earnestly.

Owen nodded approvingly. "That's right. I am glad you are entering into the spirit of the thing. It's a compact then, eh? And now, my dear girl, I've upset you enough. Take my advice and go to bed. Remember, you have got three days' hard travel before you, and a sick brother at the end of it. It's no joke, is it? What time did you say you must start in the morning?"

"The tonga will be here at six."

"Then *bon voyage*, nurse!" Owen reverently kissed the hands he held and rose from his knees.

Kathleen rose, too. He stood looking at her with a queer, irresolute smile. Then, "Don't you fret," he said cheerily, and, patting her shoulder in fatherly style, took himself off.

He muttered as he went away: "I'll

make you happy yet, Kathleen mavourneen, if I wring the fellow's neck to do it."

* * * *

Six o'clock found Kathleen ready to start, and as she mounted to her place beside the driver of the tonga, a sudden watery gleam of sunshine lit the land and transformed it in a moment from a grey country of drifting mountain mist to a glittering paradise of raindrops. She bade her friend Mrs. Weston good-bye, promising to telegraph her news, and then they rattled away helter-skelter on the sixty-mile drive, and the swamp of mist closed all about them once more.

The halt for tiffin was the only interlude in that dreary journey through the incessant rain, and Kathleen chafed even at this. For a fever of restless anxiety possessed her. She longed to be at her destination:

Wet, weary, and miserable, she descended from her perch at Kalka at last and made for shelter. A rattle of wheels and a view-halloa from the direction they had traveled arrested her steps, however. She paused, a sensation that was half hope, half dread, at her heart. She stood and watched the mail-tonga gallop up in style, saw a gigantic figure leap down and come towards her, and she put out her hands half-hysterically, crying: "How could you?"

Owen shook hands in a practical, matter-of-fact fashion eminently characteristic of him. "Beastly wet, isn't it?" he said amiably. But Kathleen only repeated tragically: "How could you?"

"Easiest thing in the world," he returned airily. "I've got a friend down at Budhpore, Villiers his name is. I'm going down to see him. You're going there, too? Jove! That's funny. I shall be able to look after you in case of rows. Oh, I shan't pester you, nurse. Don't you be afraid. I shall only be at hand if you want any fighting done. Come inside. That's better. Now, don't look suspicious. I'm as straight as they are made, and you know it. Moreover, Villiers is actual fact, as you will soon see for yourself."

"You shouldn't have come," she interrupted.

Owen smiled at her reassuringly. "It's unreasonable to say that, you know," he said, in a tone of mild remonstrance, "for I have a perfect right to travel by this train even if you do happen to be on board also. Think of it, nurse. You will be all alone, with hundreds of miles of

strangers all round you. You can't seriously object to knowing that there is someone, a fellow you can trust implicitly, within a few feet of you: You called me your friend only yesterday. And it seems to me you might possibly be glad of a friend all by yourself in the beastly, muggy hole you are going to."

Kathleen did not speak for a few seconds. Then she turned to him swiftly, impulsively. "Mr. Owen," she said, "you are the noblest man I ever met."

"Oh—rats!" said Owen, turning dusky red.

■ ■ ■

CHEVIOT'S APOLOGY.

"I SAY, can I speak to you?" asked Cheviot, in a tone of very unusual docility.

He was lying in bed, out of danger, but extremely weak. Burford was sitting in the room reading. He was usually on guard somewhere in Cheviot's neighbourhood.

He looked up at the very humble request. "What is it, dear boy? Do you want anything?"

"Yes," said Cheviot uneasily.

Burford rose at once and went to his side. "What's the matter?" he questioned in the peculiar, caressing drawl he kept for the sick-room only. "Aren't you comfortable, my dear fellow?"

"No," said Cheviot. "I'm beastly uncomfortable. Just sit down there, will you? I've got something to say to you."

Burford seated himself as directed. But Cheviot's flow of eloquence seemed incapable of carrying him any further. He lay silent for several restless seconds. Burford gave no hint of impatience.

"Look here," the boy blurted out at last, with exceedingly shamefaced candour: "You've been awfully good to me. You—you saved my life, in fact. Heaven knows why, after the abominable way I treated you. And—and—I've wanted to get it out for ever so long—I'm sorry I've been such an infernal cur. I'm not merely apologising. It's the solid truth."

Burford smiled very faintly at the latter allusion. "All right, dear fellow," he said soothingly.

"It isn't all right," said Cheviot bluntly. "I want to know if—in fact, if you will take satisfaction? We could manage it on the quiet when I am about again. Will you?"

"Give you a thorough good licking, eh?" said Burford. "It's a generous offer. But—if it's quite the same to you, my dear Cheviot—I should infinitely prefer to shake hands. That will amply satisfy me."

Cheviot pushed a weak hand towards him. His face was flushed. "You're a better chap than I took you for," he blurted out. "I'm awfully obliged to you."

Burford's hand closed suddenly and tightly upon his patient's. He did not look at Cheviot, being perfectly well aware that the boy's eyes had tears of weakness in them. And he said nothing whatever.

Nevertheless, from that moment, Cheviot's sentiments towards this man he had so vehemently hated underwent a complete change:

Burford leant back deliberately in his chair and stared at the ceiling. "You will have to take care that your sister does not overdo it, dear fellow, when she gets here," he remarked presently.

"Ah!" said Cheviot, with some eagerness. "I wonder when she will arrive? I suppose you have no idea? By the way, you know her, don't you?"

"I?" Burford's sleepy eyes opened a little wider than usual, but he continued to stare at the ceiling.

"Yes. Don't you? You said something that made me think so. It was about Jack Hilyard."

"Oh, I knew him!" said Burford.

"He was a rum chap," said Cheviot. "My sister and he were engaged for a time. Then he made the country too hot to hold him and had to bolt. And she went in for nursing."

"And came to India," murmured Burford.

"Yes, eventually. But she married first—a brute who deserted her while they were on their honeymoon. I've often wanted to meet the blackguard. I would shoot him if I got the chance."

"No doubt," drawled Burford. He did not appear to be paying much attention:

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Cheviot. "I'll swear I heard a woman's step."

He had hardly uttered the words before the door opened quietly and someone entered. Cheviot raised himself with a weak whoop of welcome, and was clasped instantly and closely in his sister's arms. Like a flood of sunshine her presence seemed to fill the room with brightness. Burford started up with his hand over his eyes as if the sight dazzled him. Then,

recovering himself, he turned and went out slowly and quietly, and shut the door behind him.

* * * * *

A little later Captain Burford presented himself before Major O'Connor at the hospital.

"I have obtained leave of absence," he said, arranging his eye-glass with extreme deliberation. "Cheviot does not want me now. So I place myself unreservedly at your disposal. Make what use you like of me."

"Mean it?" cried O'Connor. "Faith, you're the very man I want. You're worth the whole regiment for nerve. The colonel is no good at all. He goes about with a face as long as a billiard-table."

"Not without reason," remarked Burford in a casual tone. "Is it true that a man died of cholera on sentry-go last night?"

O'Connor caught him up sharply. "Don't breathe it, man. We chalked it down failure of the heart. The boys mustn't know."

"What's the good of keeping it dark?" drawled Burford. "The wrath of the gods, don't you know. It's bound to come. We may as well face it as we can't run away."

"The saints protect us!" said O'Connor.

■ ■ ■

BURFORD IN A NEW LIGHT.

THAT night cholera swept down on the station. Through the barracks with the deadly blast of the Destroyer it swept. And in the morning half-a-dozen lay dead, and five more fought for their lives with the fell disease. The regiment was ordered out under canvas at once. Burford was installed in the hospital, and there, at O'Connor's frantic appeal to the commanding officer, he remained.

"For the love of Heaven, let me have him!" the Irishman implored. "He's the only man with any backbone in him."

"If he is willing to take the risk I will not prevent him," said the colonel.

And Burford polished up his eye-glass with a peculiar smile, and expressed his willingness to accept the post of head-nurse thrust upon him by O'Connor.

A little later he lounged into the hospital, and the men who lay there close-packed marveled to see the lazy, foppish captain, who had a reputation for being the most cold-blooded beggar in the regiment, moving resolutely among them, with quiet tread and manner if possible softer and more bored than usual. But he put his art into

the lads, how, not one of them could have told. Probably the man's easy assumption of strength had a good deal to do with it, and his womanliness, his half-cynical tenderness, which were subjects of much discussion among the patients, those of them capable of discussing anything.

Men who slung oaths at the hospital orderlies whenever those luckless beings approached them, for some reason shut up speedily when an overpowering perfume of violets gave warning of the Honourable's advent. The nickname had extended beyond the precincts of the mess. There was not a man who ever spoke of him by any other title.

He was well aware that, as his former unpopularity decreased, the old, involuntary sense of awe that bound men in his presence was as strong as ever. They looked to him like children, these English boys dying in exile, but they feared his half-veiled cynicism none the less. He became O'Connor's right-hand man, living in the hospital and for the hospital, while strength and a sort of easy-going energy he affected remained.

Tales were told in the wards of whole nights spent at the bedsides of men who died, and if the comfort Burford dispensed at such times were singularly simple and unvarnished it found its way to the hearts of the rough soldiers who received it, and they blessed him as they died.

Many there were for whose lives he wrestled victoriously with the pitiless Destroyer, and to such he became a sort of demi-god, a thing to wonder at and worship respectfully from afar.

He paid little heed to O'Connor, working on the men's minds more than doctoring their bodies, jealously fostering the desire for life, gripping them almost against themselves, mastering suffering with all the strength of a mighty will.

More than once did O'Connor despair in the unequal strife and give place to his right-hand man: And on each occasion Burford, with his lazy, indolent manner of doing things, and without apparent effort, called back the life that ebbed.

O'Connor did not know till later that the man's marvelous concentration of will was beyond his physical strength, nor that all natural sleep had deserted him in consequence of the strain. He saw no change in the pale, cynical face, with its sleepy, expressionless eyes. He marked no abatement of the iron will which held men in life.

And the boys, at the hospital saw no difference either. For, womanlike, the same gentle voice drawled encouragement and sympathy to them, the same cool hand lent strength to the weak-hearted:

"The man isn't human," O'Connor declared to the colonel one day. "He's two distinct personalities, one all slush, the other all iron. He drones about the wards as if to-morrow would do, but, ye gods, you should see the boys cricking their necks for the sight of him. He saves more lives in a week than I lose in a year. And, sure, that's saying a good deal."

Burford dawdled up as he said it. "Do you know why, my good sir?" he queried, as if he found the very exertion of talking too much for him. "Because you are a doctor and I am not. There is a hidden meaning to that: So don't accuse me of being commonplace."

O'Connor shook his fist at him:

The colonel laid sudden hands on the trim, well-tailored figure. "Burford, unless you come with me at once and get a thorough rest I cancel your leave of absence," he said: "I didn't give you leave to kill yourself."

"That, sir, is a point upon which I should consult no one," smiled Burford. "I will come with you with pleasure. O'Connor, if I am wanted, send round to my quarters."

And then he went away with the colonel, leaving O'Connor, who had urged him to rest many times in vain, marveling at his extreme docility.

Some soldiers, just returned from a hard march through a heavy, rain-sodden country, spied him as he passed through the camp with the commanding officer, and raised a hoarse cheer for the man who had been steadily fighting death that they might live. But Burford paid no heed to the compliment, except to quicken his stride.

■ ■ ■

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

"HI!" sang out Cheviot, as Burford passed the open door of the smoking-room on his way to his bedroom for the prescribed rest. "There you are at last! I haven't seen you for a fortnight."

Cheviot had reached the uninteresting stage of convalescence. He was, in fact, on the eve of departure to the hills with his sister on sick leave, and in high spirits in consequence.

Burford paused a moment at sound of the boy's eager voice, then he made as if to pass on, but Cheviot raced after him with considerable energy and seized him impetuously by the arms.

"Nonsense, old fellow! You're not going to bolt like that. Come and speak to my sister. Yes, you must."

For a second Burford resisted the lad's affectionate grip. Then quite suddenly, without a word, he yielded.

Cheviot pulled him into the smoking-room with a beaming face. His sister was there, and Owen also—a towering figure in the background. Owen had a trick of turning up at odd hours to emphasise his guardianship.

"Here he is, Kath!" cried Cheviot with pride. "This is the chap who nursed me before you came, the hero of the hospital. He's horribly shy. So don't frighten him."

And there he stopped, abruptly aware that there was something wrong somewhere. His sister had risen. She did not speak, though her lips moved with a convulsive effort to do so. There was a dead silence. Then Burford bowed towards her very slightly.

"An unexpected pleasure, eh?" he murmured.

Cheviot's eager hold relaxed. He faced Burford squarely. "What do you mean?" he said, a ring of uncertainty in his voice.

Burford looked at him with a queer smile. "My boy," he said very quietly, "we have met before, your sister and I. To make things quite clear to you, I should perhaps mention that the name of Burford is merely the legacy of a friend. When—your sister—knew me last, my name was Vivian."

Cheviot fell back with a violent exclamation.

And then it was that Owen stepped gravely forward: "I have been wanting to meet you for some time, Captain Burford," he said, and though there was not a hint of agitation in his tone or bearing a sudden gleam of unaccustomed anger shot from Burford's heavy eyes.

It was the only sign of feeling he gave, however: Almost instantly he turned: "At your service!" he said coldly, and went out, Owen sternly following.

Burford led the way to his bedroom at the other side of the bungalow, and Owen, entering after him, turned and locked the door.

"I won't keep you long," he said grimly.

Burford foraged for and found a flask containing brandy. He deliberately poured some into a tumbler and mixed a little water with it without speaking. He turned round with the glass in his hand.

"Now, sir!" he said, speaking in a tone of excessive boredom. "Shall we come to business?"

Owen hesitated a second, with keen eyes on Burford's face. It struck him that the man he had come to bully looked scarcely capable of defending himself. But he did not know the Honourable Burford.

"I wish to speak to you—about Miss Vere," he said abruptly. "I am a friend of hers."

"Ah! I gathered that," drawled Burford.

He sat down and drank off half the brandy-and-water. Then he lay back in his chair in silence, his eyes half-closed:

"If you are not feeling well," said Owen brusquely, "perhaps it would be best to postpone this interview."

Burford waved the suggestion aside. "Pray proceed!" he said, in a heavy drawl. "You will not have another opportunity."

"Very well," said Owen, going ahead without further scruple. "What I have to say is this: The happiness of Miss Vere's life depends upon you, how—I am only able to guess, for she has never told me. Captain Burford, you will make her happy, or—take the consequences."

Burford smiled very faintly. "Really, sir, your simplicity is unique. May I ask what will happen if I elect to take the consequences?"

"You may," said Owen ponderously. "I shall give you a horsewhipping that you will remember to the last day of your blackguardly life."

"Ah!" said Burford serenely. "You will find a riding-whip in the corner behind you should you contemplate my immediate castigation. First, though, may I ask who you are?"

"My name is Owen."

"Thank you!" said Burford with extreme courtesy. "Now, I wonder what process of reasoning you employed to convince yourself that it could by any means conduce to Miss Vere's ultimate happiness to have anything to do with a man whom I have just heard you describe as a black-guard? I will not, however, trouble you to make that point clear. Tell me this instead: Are you trying to force me to marry the woman you yourself love?"

Owen's stern face hardened at the deliberate brutality of the question. He answered it, nevertheless, bluntly, straightforwardly: "That is my position."

"And—pardon my incredulity—you actually believe I could make her happy?" Burford raised his eyes slowly to Owen's face. There was an odd flicker that might have been amusement in their steely scrutiny. But the man's lips were drawn tightly over clenched teeth.

"I'll kill you if you don't!" Owen exclaimed with sudden passion. Burford gulped down the rest of his brandy-and-water and sat very still.

"Mr. Owen," he said at length, speaking slowly, with great difficulty, "you are very generous, don't you know. But—as it happens—I am already married."

Owen took a hasty step towards him: But Burford continued, raising his voice slightly, and he paused almost involuntarily: "You may tell my wife," he said, "that I consider her second choice of a champion better-advised than her first. And—in the event of my death—I leave her to that champion's care." His voice dropped: He sat forward suddenly and bowed his head on his hands. "Will you be good enough to leave me?" he said in a choked whisper: "I am not well."

And suddenly Owen realised that he had been looking on at the hardest-fought battle he had ever witnessed, that this man's grip on himself had been maintained in the face of ghastly odds, and that the end was come at last. The demon cholera—fierce, insatiable—had claimed another victim.

■ ■ ■

"THIS MAN IS MY HUSBAND."

A RUMOUR of Burford's seizure spread through the camp in less than an hour after his departure from the hospital. O'Connor was seen pelting in the direction of the Honourable's quarters, and the sight gave conviction to the rumour.

The consternation caused by the intelligence was universal. "Anyone but him," was the general outcry. And in the hospital men broke down utterly at the mention of his name. This for a man whom a fortnight before no one had loved and a good many had openly detested.

It was Owen who sought out Kathleen half-an-hour after the doctor's arrival, and told her the terrible news with merciful

brevity. She was alone, her brother neglected for once. He expected to see her give way, but she heard him out with not so much as a tremor. And then she turned to go.

"You mustn't see him," said Owen, instantly:

But she turned back to him with such resolution in her soft eyes that he knew all opposition would be useless.

"Yes," she said gently, "I must go to him: You kept me away from helping at the hospital. But you cannot keep me away from this. You must not even try. Mr. Owen, I did not tell you before: I tell you now. This man is my husband."

"I know," Owen said hoarsely. "But—Kathleen, hear me! You have never seen cholera. You told me so yourself. And it's a ghastly thing: You'll never forget it. Besides—do you think this man would wish you to see his suffering? It—it's the last thing I should wish for the woman I loved."

He stopped abruptly, realising that he was making no impression: Kathleen laid a very gentle hand on his arm:

"Come with me, Mr. Owen," she said.

And Owen abandoned his protest and went.

They found O'Connor and the colonel with Burford, both men striving to maintain a struggle that Burford himself had abandoned. He was barely conscious of his surroundings, and from the first he had made no attempt to battle with the torture that gripped him. In his helpless agony he made no effort to hold fast the life that ebbed lower and ever lower towards the deep waters, that to his bewildered brain seemed to seethe and rush at his very feet.

O'Connor strove manfully to rally the stricken man's failing faculties. "Hold on, dear old chap!" he urged. "Don't let yourself go: We'll pull you through: Only keep your heart up."

And Burford answered him in a slow, laboured whisper: "Let me die!" he said:

It was a few minutes later that Kathleen crept into the room followed by Owen. The colonel saw her and motioned her away: But O'Connor turned instantly and made way for her. She went noiselessly, swiftly, and bent over the man who, racked and convulsed with pain, still moaned to them from time to time to let him die.

"Everard!" she said.

He looked up and recognised her instantly: She knelt down beside him, and lifting one

of his clenched hands she pressed her lips upon it.

"Everard, my darling, listen to me!" she said, and her low voice thrilled the silent listeners with its intensity, its anguish. "I have come back to you. You must not go away from me. I love you, I want you, I belong to you—always, darling, always, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health. Everard, do you hear me? Dearest, speak to me! Show me you understand! Oh, Everard!"

He raised himself, gripping her hands convulsively, in answer to the appeal. There was a sudden gleam of earthly longing in his tortured eyes. "Till—death—us—lo—part!" he gasped, and dropped back in a terrible paroxysm of agony. But he kept her hands in his, and she yielded to the anguished clasp without a tremor.

"And afterwards too, Everard!" she said, with a yearning tenderness. "Death does not really part. For love is deathless."

He tried to speak, but failed. Only he drew her closer still; and so with hands tight clasped they went down to the quiet River and halted at the brink.

She did not shrink in that still place. Her one thought was for him; her one hope, her one prayer, was that he might feel her close to him in the dim and silent path he was treading.

But there came a time when Burford did not know her, when his senses reeled beneath the agony, and he was as a man groping in outer darkness. Then he knew only a vague and aching wonder at the labouring anguish of a universe. Yet he clung to the hands he held with desperate persistence, feeling that to relinquish his hold was to relinquish his very being, and snap at once the slender thread that bound him to things finite.

So, fast clinging to the earthly chain that had worn so thin in the ghastly struggle, Burford passed down to the dim borders of the Land of Promise. And it was a woman's voice praying at his side that brought down light at last into his darkness.

* * * * *

Hours after, when they had drawn him back once more to the life that beat at his bedside, he could only lie and wonder in aimless fashion at this strange influence which had, as it were, charmed him back from the very gates of death.

It took him a long time to realise that

it was not his fancy alone that heard the gentle voice of a woman about his bed. And even when he began to understand more fully, a curious reluctance to speak, to break the spell of her unprotesting devotion, possessed him. He almost feared that by speech he would frighten her away.

And then one day when she was settling him for a sleep he took his resolution in both hands. He had been watching her with languid eyes for a long time.

"You are taking great care of me, nurse," he murmured, "I wonder why?" And before she could utter a word in answer he took her hand in his own trembling one and put it to his lips.

She knelt down instantly beside his pillow. "You know why, my darling," she said, and her voice quivered with the effort to drive back her emotion.

He smiled a very shaky smile. "Tell me!" he said.

And with her face close to his, she told him.

"Oh, Everard," she whispered, "I would not say it before. In my pride I let you go. But my heart has been nearly broken, and I will tell you now. Everard, I never—loved him. I did not know what love was till you came to me. And then—you had it all." She broke off with a sob that would not be suppressed. He drew her head very tenderly down upon his pillow.

"Hush, sweetheart!" he said, speaking as if he found articulation something of an effort, "I was a brute to you. I think an evil spirit possessed me. I want to know if you can ever manage to blot out those two years of your life and give the rest to a man you do not know—a man who has treated you abominably, who has forfeited every right to your goodness of heart, much more to your love; but who would do his best to make you happy if you could bring yourself to forgive him, and—let him—try?"

She lifted her head quickly at the sudden quiver of his voice, and she saw that the eyes that were usually so cynical and cold were full of heavy tears. She leant towards him with passionate, yearning tenderness.

"Everard—darling, you shall not ask me such a thing," she said vehemently. "You hurt me by suggesting it. See, dearest, I am your own loving wife, your own flesh, to do with as you will. The only happiness I desire, the greatest happiness I can think of, is to be with you. Oh, don't you understand?"

His weak arms went round her as she

ended. He did not utter a word for many seconds. Then at last he began to speak in something like his ordinary tone.

"There is a chain somewhere," he said, "that used to be round my neck. Can you find it?"

She brought it to him, a slender chain with a gold ring dangling from it. Burford detached the latter with shaky fingers.

"Your friend Owen would like to see this," he observed, taking her hand in his with a tremulous smile. "A noble fellow, dear girl, but a trifle uncivilised. Still, I have something to be grateful to him for. I did not know, till he somewhat artistically informed me, that—my wife—cared."

"She has told you so herself now," murmured Kathleen, tears rushing to her eyes.

"She has done more than that," he said with great tenderness, "far more than she herself will ever know. Now, darling! What a thin hand it is. The third finger, don't you know. Ah! That is better. You must never take it off again. Now kiss me, little wife."

She stooped and pressed her lips to his, closely, lingeringly. And in that moment the bitterness of two souls became a thing shattered and forgotten, as the grey cloud-wreaths that scatter and flee away before the radiant coming of the dawn.

■ ■ ■

HAPPINESS AT LAST.

"HIGHLY satisfactory!" pronounced Owen a little later, when Kathleen sought him out and laid her case before him. "Things have panned out in style, eh, nurse? You'll be able to dispense with my humble services before long, I'm thinking. If you think I am to be trusted with the sole charge of that precious little brother of yours, we propose to make tracks for Kashmir in two days, and spend his sick leave loafing around the country. Will that suit you all right?"

"Kashmir!" echoed Kathleen.

"For three months' recruiting. We may see something to shoot as well. You can spare us, eh? We thought it would be rather a good way of effacing ourselves. Awfully considerate, wasn't it?"

Kathleen looked at him, her attention

caught by a certain note in his cheery voice. Owen was tinkering up an old rifle of her brother's and seemed wholly absorbed in the fascinating operation.

"Do you think I should ever want you to do that?" she asked.

"Great Heavens, no!" Owen glanced at her and returned to his work. "You wouldn't, of course, nurse. It isn't your way. But the other fellow—the fellow you happen to belong to—might, and unfortunately we have got to think of him now. It's all right, dear," leaning back to survey the rifle rather ruefully. "Don't you worry about me. I was never more satisfied in my life."

"That is because I owe you so much," she said, and with that dear Irish impulse, the secret of her charm, she laid her hand very gently on his shoulder.

"On the contrary, you owe me nothing," said Owen, contemplating his greasy hands with regret. "I'm sorry I'm so beastly oily, nurse. It handicaps a fellow so when he wants to be extra impressive. But I do assure you, mavourneen, you owe me nothing. You have treated me as a friend, and that was exactly what I wanted you to do." He got up and for the first time faced her squarely. "Tell me, nurse," he said gently. "You are quite happy?"

"Perfectly happy for myself," she said. "But——"

"Then I am happy, too," he asserted. "So, as I remarked before, it's all right, isn't it?"

"I would thank you if I could," she said very earnestly, "for all your generous care for me."

Owen laughed suddenly, in a way she did not quite understand.

"No, no, dear!" he said. "Don't try! It wouldn't be at all appropriate, believe me."

And he went away to wash the grease from his hands, whistling gaily.

* * * * *

Six weeks later, when the Honourable Burford and his wife landed in England, behold they trod enchanted ground, and all the world lay smiling at their feet.

And amidst the cold glory of the loveliest country on earth a certain big-hearted Englishman was stifling heartache.

Half-Minute Stories.

The Brightest and Best Little Stories of all Times.

The humour which appeals to foreigners may not always appeal to Britishers. This month I am making an experiment by publishing a number of jokes from the leading German humorous papers—they appear on the opposite page. I shall like to hear what my readers think of them. Those who wish to express an opinion on the subject are asked to drop a postcard, marked "Opinion," to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 16 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

A QUESTION OF NAMES.

ON one occasion, a Bishop who prided himself on never forgetting either the name or face of any clergyman in his diocese happened to be traveling somewhere by rail, when, at a certain station, a clergyman got into the same carriage in which the Bishop was.

The Bishop recognised the man's face, but could not remember his name, and not wishing to acknowledge his forgetfulness leant forward, and, with a charming smile, said:

"Excuse me for forgetting, but *how* do you spell your name?"

"J O N E S, my lord," was the reply:



BENEFICIAL MEDICINE.

THE following happened in one of the colleges of the United Kingdom:

The principal made it his business to inquire very minutely into the conduct of the students. It came to his knowledge that one of them kept a barrel of beer in his rooms, and he ordered the criminal to appear before him, with a view to lecturing him severely on intemperance. He told him that he had discovered his habit of keeping beer in his rooms, and asked whether he could justify such conduct.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the student. "I have been ordered to take it by my doctor."

"H'm! And have you any reason for believing that it has done you any good?"

"Yes, sir; it is marvelous what it has done for me. When that barrel came I could scarcely lift it. Now I can balance it easily on one hand!"

CAUGHT BY A DOLL.

LITTLE Edith Dalton is just beginning to read the newspapers. Yesterday she laid down the morning paper and said:

"Mamma?"

"Well, dear?"

"I read in the paper of how a doll with a whistle inside saved a house from being robbed by burglars."

"How did that happen?"

"Well, the little girl who owned the doll left it lying on the floor, and when the burglar trod on it the whistle inside the doll went off and woke the papa, and he frightened the burglar away before he had a chance to steal anything."

"Wasn't that funny?"

"Yes, but mamma——"

"Well?"

"I haven't any doll like that."

"No, but you have plenty of other dolls."

"But, mamma."

"Well?"

"If you could get me a doll with a whistle inside it I'd let you put it on the floor every night to catch burglars."



DIDN'T RECOGNISE IT.

A CERTAIN German professor of music to be met with in London drawing-rooms is an entertaining old gentleman. To him recently a lady said, when one of his compositions had just been rendered by one of the guests:

"How do you like the rendering of your song, professor?"

"Vos dot my song?" replied the professor. "I did not know him."

From *Meggendorfer Blätter*, München.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN.

VISITOR: "I see that you have had a telephone laid down to the kitchen. I call that practical."

Master: "Well, you see, we want to give notice to the cook."



HIS DINNER.

A: "What's Solomon's clerk doing every day at the kitchen window of the Grand Restaurant? Is he waiting for somebody?"

B: "Oh, no; he's only inhaling his dinner."



THE EYE OF THE LAW.

MANAGER: "That loud snoring during the third act was unbearable; why didn't you put the fellow out?"

Porter: "Couldn't be done, sir; it was the policeman on duty."



FAST TRAINS.

GUARD OF HIGHLAND TRAIN (to business traveler who got in at the last station): "I say, the boots of the 'Golden Stag' has been running after us for the last half hour. I suppose you have forgotten to tip him."



NOTHING TO LAUGH AT.

MAUD (giving her cousin a sheet of paper): "See here, George, I've made a joke."

George reads, and bursts out laughing.

Maud (offended): "Oh, you needn't laugh so, George. I think it is quite a good one."



HARD LINES.

"I HEARD that your wealthy uncle died: He has left you all his money, I suppose?"

"Unfortunately not; he was conscientious enough to pay off all my debts before his death, and thus utterly ruined me."



SPOILT IT.

TOURIST: "How delightful to be able to breathe the pure mountain air 3000 feet above sea level. Great Scott! I've forgotten my cigars."



From *Lustige Blätter*.

THE HAPPY ONE.

"So Miss Mayer got engaged. Who is the happy one?"

"Old Mayer."

From *Fliegende Blätter*.

WHAT TO DO.

AUNT: "I've been singing to baby for the last half hour and it's still crying—what am I to do?"

Father: "Stop singing."



MORE TO COME.

MANAGER OF PROVINCIAL THEATRICAL TROUPE (to actor who has fled behind the scenes, wiping decayed eggs from countenance): "You must go on again at once; the Squire hasn't hit you yet."



HE DAREN'T.

POLICEMAN: "Move on, please!"

Mr. Henpeck: "I shall do nothing of the kind. My wife told me distinctly to wait for her here."



INSEPARABLE.

"HERE are the two poets again; fast friends, aren't they?"

"Yes, they were at school together, went up to the 'Varsity together, and now you find them together in every waste-paper basket."



From *Frankfurter Witzblatt*.

VERY AWKWARD.

MAID (rushing into the room): "O Lord, mum, Miss Evelyn has eloped with the coachman!"

Mother: "How awkward; I just wanted to go for a drive."



MOLLY'S TROUBLE.

LADY: "Well, Molly, what are you so sad about? Is your sweetheart at the manoeuvres?"

Cook (sobbing): "All three of 'em!"



From *Ulk*.

TRUE EITHER WAY.

MOTHER (to small boy going to school): "Now, Charlie, be good and attentive at school, and remember that what you have learnt nobody can take from you."

Charlie: "Yes, mother, but what I have not learnt nobody can take from me, either."

A DOMESTIC TREASURE.

SIR SQUIRE BANCROFT told a very good story at a dinner recently.

A young lady went to London to visit an aunt. One evening as the girl was leaving in a cab for a party the aunt said :

"Now, mind, don't you pay him more than one shilling; it's his legal fare."

Arrived at her destination, the girl sprang out, handed cabby one shilling, and bounded up the steps of the house.

"'Ere, I say, miss," called cabby, "kin I ask you a question?"

"Yes, you may."

"Well, are you married?"

"No," she cried indignantly, "I'm not."

"Well, well, somebody's agoin' to git a treasure; for I never seed a gal as could make a bob go further or do more 'ard work nor you, miss!"



A FASHIONABLE ELOPEMENT.

THE agitated girl looked back through the clouds of dust that rose in their rear around the motor-car.

"Algernon," she exclaimed in terror, "papa is pursuing us!"

"Let him pursue," chuckled Algernon: "The last thing I did before we started was to slip out and change his storage battery. It's only got about one mile in it, and then it'll stop dead."

And even as Algernon spoke these words his motor-car drew away from the pursuer, while from the lagging machine far in the rear came faintly to the ear hoarse cries of impotent rage from the baffled parent.



SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY.

A LITTLE girl and her aunt went for a walk the other day, and as they walked the aunt caught her skirt on the sharp edge of her shoe heel and tore off several inches of lace.

"Will you tear it off for me, dear?" she asked. "I cannot mend it now."

The accommodating little girl dropped on her knee, and for several minutes there was a sound of tearing—really much more tearing than was necessary to remove a piece of lace half-an-inch wide.

"Haven't you finished yet?" finally asked the aunt.

"Yes," said the little girl, rising wearily. "I was taking all this off. I wanted enough for my doll's skirt while I was about it, and the little bit you tore wasn't enough."

A SHATTERED DREAM.

A DREAM about a lottery caused the cook of a middle-aged man to disregard the advice of her master and invest her savings in one of these speculations. A few days later the employer saw to his amazement that the ticket she had drawn had won £20,000.

He was a bachelor, she was an old servant; it was impossible to think of parting. He proposed and was accepted: and they were married by special license next morning.

As they drove away from the church he said to her:

"Well, Molly, two happy events in one day. You have married, I trust, a good husband. You have something else—first let me ask about the lottery prize."

Thinking her husband meant to scold, she replied with a sigh of relief:

"Don't say no more about it. I thought how it would be, and that I should never hear the last of it, so I sold the ticket to the baker for a guinea profit!"



ROTHSCHILD'S REBUKE.

BARON ROTHSCHILD, one of the most unostentatious of millionaires, has a dry way of administering a deserved snub, which is appreciated by everybody except the recipient of the rebuke.

Not very long ago he was entertaining at luncheon a distinguished party. The meal went on admirably. Nothing marred the general enjoyment save the silly loquacity of one young man.

This young man insisted on monopolising the conversation. He did nothing but talk about himself—about his books, his work, his love affairs, his motor-car.

Finally he jumped to his feet:

"By Jove!" he said, "I must show you all my sleeve-links. I got them this morning. They are malachite."

And he passed from one guest to another, exhibiting the links, which were neither beautiful nor costly, nor in any way out of the ordinary:

"Malachite!" he kept repeating—"genuine malachite!"

Baron Rothschild watched the young man's progress with a faint sneer. When the links reached him he touched them with his finger superciliously, and drawled:

"Ah, malachite—eh? It is a handsome stone. I have always liked it. I have a mantelpiece of it in the next room!"

EDISON'S PHILOSOPHY.

ON the door of Edison's laboratory hangs a large piece of canvas, on which is printed, evidently with the inventor's own hand, these words, which set forth briefly his philosophy of life :

I shall pass through this world but once.
Any good thing that in passing I can do,
Or any kindness that I can show to any human being,
Let me do it now.
Let me not defer it,
Nor neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.



TOOK NO RISKS.

AN American tourist doing Scotland put up one night at an old-fashioned inn a few miles from Aberdeen. During the night he was awakened by the entrance into his bedroom of a figure dressed in white, which walked into the room and then out:

In the morning when paying his bill he remarked to the innkeeper :

"I guess you Scotch people make game of us Americans with your talk of haunted houses. Now, tell me who it was who walked into my bedroom during the night !"

"Weel, sir, since ye've asked," replied the cautious Scot, "it wis me. The last American wha slept in my hoose walked off wi' a' the silver, an' I didna care tae rin ony risks."



WHAT HALF-A-CROWN DID.

A MILLIONAIRE, who began life as a sawyer and carpenter, and whose honesty and industry carried him on to wealth as a railway contractor, sank all his money in boring for coal, no coal being found.

Then he called a large meeting of the miners, and told them that he had spent the earnings of his life in the speculation, and would have to abandon it: Holding up half-a-crown, he declared that that was all he had left of forty thousand pounds, which he had sunk in the mine.

A fellow called out : "And we'll have that, too !"

"So you shall !" cried the master, and threw the coin among them.

This bit of desperation so delighted the men that they straightway determined to go to work again, wages or no wages. In a few days they found excellent coal, and plenty of it, and their master was again a rich man:

GETTING HIS OWN BACK.

AN ironworker having had the worst of an argument with a friend, decided to get even with him.

Waiting, therefore, until his enemy had retired to rest one night, he approached his street door, and knocked loudly in order to wake him. Opening the bedroom window, the other hurriedly inquired what the noise was all about.

"Why," replied the outside one, "one of your windows is wide open."

"Which one ?"

"Why, the one you have your head through," chuckled the other, as he went away satisfied with the plot.

In the commercial room smoking is not allowed before 9 p.m. Once a young traveler was enjoying his cigar before that hour, when an old roadster came in, and immediately rang the bell and ordered a bottle of wine to be debited to the offender's account.

"All right," said the young fellow. "I have infringed the rules, I own, and I'll pay the fine. And I can offer you one of the finest cigars made."

The old traveler accepted the cigar, and the two sat comfortably over their wine. By-and-by the youngster rang the bell, and, holding his watch in his hand, said :

"Waiter, it's not nine o'clock yet. Bring in another bottle, and be good enough to place it to the account of this gentleman."

I shall be glad to receive from readers anecdotes of a similar nature to the foregoing, and will pay for any *new and original* ones published. All stories should be sent to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in envelopes marked "Getting," and posted so as to arrive not later than May 8th.



A PHYSICIAN'S HOBBY.

SIR FRANCIS LAKING, the King's physician, has a curious hobby. He collects toys: Penny highly-coloured novelties, purchased from gutter merchants, are his particular fancy.

When he has a free evening, he sits at his dinner-table and forgets the anxieties of the day by exercising his mind on the mechanical wonders of modern Toyland.

Sir Francis buys the toys himself, stopping in the streets to treat himself to any novelty which may have taken his fancy.

In the competition for anecdotes containing Cool Requests some very excellent specimens were sent in. Here are some of the best received.

GOOD SECURITY.

A GENTLEMAN passing a crossing-sweeper in London some time ago, in reply to the usual request for a copper, told the crossing-sweeper he was sorry that he had nothing less than a shilling.

"I'll get yer change, sor, and come back stright. If yer don't believe me, hold me broom."



A SIMPLE REQUEST.

A FEW days after a poor woman won a prize of one million francs in a great French lottery, she received the following letter among many others of a similar nature :

You have a million, consequently you are rich. But you would be equally rich if you had only 900,000 francs, so you could easily spare me 100,000. They can be sent me through the post in the form of one thousand money orders for one hundred francs apiece. I don't want them all at once, but will be quite content to receive fifty a day for twenty consecutive days.



WHY SHE WAITED.

In the window of a country general store, which was also the post-office, the proprietor exhibited a notice to the effect that with every ten shillings' worth of goods bought he would present the customer with half-a-pound of tea.

One day an old lady came into the shop to purchase two postal orders of five shillings each.

These were given to her, but she did not make any movement to leave the establishment, so the shopkeeper asked her if she had any further requirements.

"I'm waiting for my half pound of tea," was the reply.

She didn't get it.



COOL, INDEED!

A LITTLE girl was once sent with a note from her mother, to be delivered at the next-door neighbour's house.

The note was as follows :

DEAR MRS. SMITH,—Will you please lend me your tiger-skin, which I've seen hanging on the wall of your hall, as my new door-mat has just been stolen, and the children coming in and out so often make the house so dirty with nothing to clean their shoes on? The skin shall be returned to you as soon as we can get a fresh door-mat. With kind regards, from

E. JONES.

Mrs. Smith's reply is not recorded.

MOVING TO ORDER.

ONE very wet day last winter, a lady took an omnibus on her way to Kensington. At one of the stopping-places the two passengers between her and the door got out, and a rather over-dressed woman stepped in and seated herself on the same side near the door. Leaning towards lady number one, she said in a peremptory voice :

"Come and sit next me."

Rather surprised, the first lady asked "Why?"

"Oh, because I don't want a damp person to get in and sit by me," was the surprising rejoinder.



BEHIND THE TIMES.

THE following letter, addressed to a prominent firm of nurserymen and seedsmen, speaks for itself :

DEAR SIRs,—I, the undersigned, am in receipt of your esteemed catalogue. I have perused the letterpress, admired the illustrations, and seriously pondered your terms of business.

With the first two items I am exceedingly well pleased, but your terms of business appear to me rather antiquated, particularly as regards novelties.

Therefore, with the object in view of bringing your methods more up to date, and at the same time improving my garden, and deterring me from breaking the Tenth Commandment, I beg to suggest that you send out free samples of all novelties in all sections of your very estimable catalogue.

Hoping you will see your way to accede to the above request,—I remain, yours faithfully, A. C.



THEN HE RAN.

MR. CATHAM is the possessor of a wooden leg, and the other day he was the victim of one of the coolest requests on record.

Next door to Mr. Catham there lives a boy who is likely to make his way in the world, if "cheek" counts for anything.

Mr. Catham was sitting at his front door one Saturday afternoon, when this boy came walking by.

"If you please, Mr. Catham," he said, "are you going out to-day?"

"No, my lad," said Mr. Catham. "Why?"

"'Cos I thought if you wasn't, perhaps you'd lend me yer wooden leg to play tip-cat with!"

If he had not quickly made himself scarce that boy would have got Mr. Catham's wooden leg with a vengeance.

Mr. Fox Russell, one of the few really humorous writers of the present day, hardly needs an introduction. Most of us have had the pleasure of reading his stories in PUNCH, the ROYAL MAGAZINE, PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, and other well-known periodicals. When asked his reasons for selecting "Sorrows of a Yachtsman" as his best story, he replied: "I haven't the remotest idea—except that it amused me, at the time of writing it, more than any other which I can recall at the moment."

Sorrows of a Yachtsman.

By FOX RUSSELL.

DECIDED to ask Mr. and Mrs. Gobbledown and their niece, Miss Barbara Lamb—better known to the profane vulgar as "Baa Lamb"—for a week on the yacht. Also old Admiral Roustabout. Terrible person; but felt bound to ask him, as matter of duty. To all these I sent invitations, devoutly hoping they wouldn't be accepted. With my usual luck, they all were. Must ask little Buskin, the actor, to amuse them, and keep us all lively. Did so and wrote, telling them all to assemble at Town Quay, Southampton, on Saturday afternoon. Then wired to my skipper at Dover, instructing him to bring yacht round to Southampton Water.

Skipper wires me: "Impossible to get to Southampton in time unless wind changes." Very annoying. My yacht, *Isolde*, now lying in Dover. Hate Dover, so will not join there. Wired Skipper to get to Southampton as soon as possible; and also sent wires to the Gobbledowns, old Roustabout, and Buskin, putting them off from Saturday to the following Monday:

Gobbledown a great amateur yachtsman: As good as any paid hand. He says so himself, and he ought to know. This is the first time I have ever asked him on the *Isolde*, though he has hinted pretty strongly for an invitation ever since I first fitted out. Rather loud and strident-voiced man. Mrs. G. severe-looking person of eminently correct deportment. "Baa Lamb" quite a nonentity. Admiral a good-hearted man enough, but aggressive. Buskin—well, an amusing little beggar. Oh, I daresay we shall all get on admirably together. Still—Well, never meet troubles half-way. I put aside any misgivings I may secretly entertain, and start for Southampton: Skipper and two of the "hands" meet me at Southampton-West Station, and then the Admiral turns up:

"Aha!" he jerks out gruffly. "So you have arrived, eh? Thought perhaps you wouldn't, after putting me off before. Deuced inconvenient for me that postponement was, I can tell you, my boy. However, I forgive you."

I thanked him humbly for this concession, and asked if my men should look after his luggage and get it aboard.

"Get it aboard—get it aboard!" he snapped. "Why, certainly: What the blazes else do you think I brought it for?"

Felt still more humble after this, and was just turning to tell the mate about calling a cab when a terrific smack on the back—(wish this custom would die out)—made me jump yards. It emanated from Gobbledown, already attired in blue serge and yachting cap. He stood a pace or two in front of his wife and niece; they had all come down in my train from Waterloo but mercif—mysteriously, I mean—missed me at the London terminus.

"Hulloa, my dear fellow! delighted to see you. My wife and niece so glad you have included them in your invitation. Only wish we were off for a year's cruise instead of a month!"

Very hearty of him; but my letter distinctly specified a *week*, not a month. Determined, later on, to drop broad hint to this effect:

Then Gobbledown poked me playfully in the ribs, and said:

"I say, old fellow, your men might as well take *our* baggage now they're about it, eh? Rather a good idea for saving trouble?"

I thought it was—i.e. for saving the Gobbledown family trouble. Visions of my gig sinking under the load flitted across my anxious mind, and I sighed, in gentle resignation, as I told the mate to order

two cabs. Then the Admiral, in a perfectly audible whisper, asked :

"Who the blazes is this feller, eh?" And for reply, I introduced them: "Mr. Gobbledown—Admiral Roustabout."

With a dreary attempt at pleasantry, I gave a little frozen smile, and added: "As you are to be shipmates, you may as well——"

"Yow, yow, yow, yow!" howled a terrier, whose tail had just been trodden on by a fifteen-stone porter.

"Oh, my poor Agrippa!" moaned Mrs. Gobbledown, as she picked him up in her arms, and glared viciously at a porter, who went on, imperturbably, with his usual occupation of smashing the passengers' luggage as though nothing had happened.

So Agrippa was evidently Mrs. Gobbledown's dog, and she had brought him here to share my hospitality and enliven the proceedings on board my yacht. So kind of her—always so kind of people when they bring their pretty pets with them. Of course I could have done without Agrippa, but—well, there he was.

Two cabs, loaded with mountainous piles of luggage, were soon groaning along towards the Town Quay.

Gobbledown was all hilarity. Even Mrs. G. looked less severe, as she evidently reflected upon the fact that I should have to pay all the transport expenses, while the Baa Lamb prattled gently, with an air of chastened merriment, about nothing in particular.

The Admiral alone was gloomy. He had taken a dislike to Gobbledown; and this, at the beginning of our short cruise, boded ill.

Arrived at the Town Quay, the luggage heaps were quickly attacked by the gig's crew, whilst I looked in vain for Buskin. No sign of "this versatile actor," as the newspapers generally dubbed him. Buskin must have missed his train.

The mate, who had followed down with the two hands in the second cab, came up to me in a profuse state of perspiration.

"Can't possibly get no more of these bales"—he meant luggage—"into the gig, sir, without sinkin' her. Must make another journey for 'em, I suppose." I felt apologetic, but kept firm voice, as I answered airily :

"Yes, that will be best. You can take us aboard, and then come back for the luggage."

"Wha-a-a-t!" yelled the Admiral.

"Leave my bag and portmanteau on the quay here to be stolen, whilst we go aboard? Not if I know it! Whathedevilnext?"

Embarrassing situation. I suggested that one of the hands should remain to watch.

"Can't do that, sir," breaks in skipper, "wouldn't be enough to row ye out, then."

"Dear me, very trying. Well, suppose Gobbledown were to stop behind to look after the——"

"No, no, old chap!" from Gobbledown, moving towards the gig. "I'll go aboard your old barky—I'm so jolly thirsty, I want my tea"—(N.B.—that Gobbledown always takes his "tea" out of a tall tumbler)—"so *you* stop and mind the stuff. I'll steer," and without waiting for any further discussion on the subject he floundered hastily into the stern-sheets, nearly capsizing the gig as he soused himself into the best seat, and seized the yoke-lines. I sighed resignedly, and, turning to the Admiral, invited him to enter the boat.

"What, with that feller steering? You must take me for a fool!" he roared.

Matter at last compromised by Mrs. G. and the Baa Lamb, together with some of the portmanteaux and bags, being stowed uncomfortably into the gig. They started off for the yacht, and upon arriving alongside—as my skipper ruefully informed me afterwards—Gobbledown pulled the wrong yoke-line and ran the boat's stem into the *Isolde's* side. The shock threw the bowman on his back and knocked a hat-box overboard. Beyond this, and the damage to the yacht's paint, I am thankful to say that there was no harm done. Left alone on the quay with the Admiral, we took seats upon our portmanteaux and waited rather sadly for the gig's return. Admiral Roustabout, with many grunts, ignited an evil-smelling pipe, and said :

"Can't understand your friend Gobbledown knowing anything about yachting: When I commanded the old *Ariadne* I remember—— Hullo, why—— Whathedevilsthis?" He broke off hastily, adjusting his *pince-nez* and glaring at a somewhat unconventionally dressed figure which had approached us unobserved. I looked up and beheld what he had tersely described as "this." The figure was attired in white duck trousers, blue serge reefer jacket with large brass anchor buttons, and a broad white linen collar turned down over the neck. The whole was surmounted by a black glazed straw hat, with a band on it, lettered in gold "*H.M.S. Terrible*." after-

the style of children in charge of their nurserymaids.

Then the figure—which seemed a strangely familiar one to me—stood right over us; its hands were laid to the slack of its ducks fore and aft, and, with a truly T. P. Cooke kind of hitch, a voice carolled forth:

"What, ho! Rouse up, my merry, merry men! The anchor's weighed! and so was I just now. Eleven stone four, by the automatic penny-in-the-slot machine! Tip us your flipper, my hearty! I like the cut of your jib!"

It was Buskin: I must admit that, as in shamefaced, shambling manner I introduced him to the Admiral—Oh, that band round the hat!—I felt hot all over:

"Whathedevilisit?" said the gallant tar, still staring hard through his *pince-nez*.

"This—er—this is Mr. Roscius Buskin," I stammered uneasily. My eyes, by a sort of unholy fascination, were glued, as it were, to the "H.M.S. *Terrible*" (too terrible) hat-band.

The Admiral merely emitted a deep grunt as he jerked his head forward with what was intended to be a bow. Then a horrible silence ensued. I ventured to break it at last by saying:

"Where is your luggage? The gig has gone off——"

"Don't speak of it as if it were fireworks, dear boy!" chirped Buskin, at once recovering his usual aplomb.

The Admiral, who dislikes a spirit of levity when applied to anything nautical, scowled at Buskin. I foresaw that the latter's facetiousness was likely to make trouble for us later on. It did.

Buskin at last condescended to inform me that he had been so late for his train that all his luggage had been left behind at Waterloo, whilst he himself had got out at the wrong Southampton station, and driven thence in a cab.

"But it will be all right, dear boy; it will be all right at night, as we say on the histrionic boards. I'll borrow a suit of pyja—oh-no-we-never-mention-'ems from you, and then I shall do all right, 'till daylight doth appear!'"

"Here's the gig," I cried, with a feeling of relief, as my boat brought up at the foot of the steps.

The Admiral, clutching at his huge umbrella and hauling a kit-bag, descended and took his seat in the stern-sheets; Buskin, with an affected nautical roll which

nearly produced a catastrophe to the white ducks (so tight that Buskin must have been put into them with a shoehorn), followed him; the rest of the impedimenta was got in, and then, at last, we started for the yacht.

Nobody spoke much on the short pull out. The Admiral was grumpy, and Buskin temporarily subdued, whilst my own agony of mind, whenever I reflected upon the fact that the crew must be silently giggling at that fearsome hatband, may be better imagined than described. Cold print is wholly inadequate to convey what I thought of Buskin's outrageous "get-up."

As we got alongside the yacht the skipper came to the gangway; but on catching the first glimpse of the *Terrible* legend incontinently retired, and walked forward with unbecoming haste, stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth to prevent an explosion of laughter. Then Gobble-down, after one look over the side, disappeared suddenly from the deck. The Baa Lamb gazed, mystified for a moment, at the apparition, and then exclaimed "Oh, Auntie!" in loud tones. Altogether, an unpleasant situation for me. Buskin himself seemed blandly unconscious that his attire was anything but strictly correct—absolutely orthodox, in fact. He skipped lightly up the side, and, striking a theatrical attitude on the deck, exclaimed: "Once aboard the lugger——" and then paused.

"Well," grunted the Admiral, waiting open-mouthed to hear the end of the sentence, "how's it go on, hey?"

"Oh, it doesn't go on; there is no more—at least, I never heard any more," replied Buskin cheerily.

The Admiral went off, scowling, to his berth. I introduced Buskin to the ladies, and afterwards handed him over to the steward to be conducted to his cabin. Then I went below, and found Gobbledown in *mine*.

This was most upsetting. To be turned out of one's cabin by one's own guest was—was—— Confound the steward! What on earth was he thinking about to allow this?

"Steward!" I called, and when he came to me in the saloon I gave him a piece of my mind on the subject.

"Not my fault, sir, I assure you," he began. "Mr. Gobbledown told me, directly he came aboard, that you said he was to 'ave the best cabin in the ship, sir, so I naturally showed him into the

owner's cabin, sir. Thought they was your orders, sir."

This was too much! Although a mild-mannered man, I felt that the time had come for me to assert myself, so rapped sharply at Gobbledown's door—or, rather, at *my* door—and said:

"You've made a mistake, my dear fellow; the next one is *your* cabin."

"Never mind, old man; anything will do for me," came a muffled voice from within.

"Yes, but you really must come out," I replied, with a firmness which surprised myself, "the steward shall shift your things." And after another determined effort on the part of Gobbledown to adhere to my cabin he was obliged to give way—with a very bad grace—and go into the next:

Thought I would speak to skipper about getting under way next morning, so ran up companion, sprawling over Agrippa, who had gone to sleep on top stair, and measuring my full length on the deck: D—ear Agrippa!

Agrippa yelled, and Mrs. Gobbledown rushed out of the ladies' cabin all hair-curlers and dressing-gown. She snatched her pet up in her arms, and turning with polite resentment to me, exclaimed: "Oh, don't hurt my little dog! Agrippa has always been kindly treated!"—plainly implying that I had *ill*-treated him. Again I say d—elighted Agrippa!

Admiral joined me, and after calling attention to the incontrovertible fact that Buskin had been walking the deck with nails in his boots, proceeded to give invaluable expert opinion upon shrouds, halliards, sheets, and top-sails, winding up a twenty minutes' dissertation by informing me that my skipper *must* be a fool. So nice of him:

Tried, at first, to keep in touch with his nautical talk, but gave it up as he rattled out something that, to my disordered imagination, sounded like: "And if you must have these new-fangled fal-de-ral's, why don't you keel-haul the topmast lifts, cut away the fore-foot, brace back the stanchions of the main-halliards, run up your gaff until it's well past the cross-trees of your foresail, and set your spanker-boom abaft the peak? And there you are!" he concluded, with an air of triumph which I felt ought to have carried conviction to my mind. So I replied vaguely: "Yes. There you are, as you say," and immediately

afterwards escaped below, leaving the gallant tar to tackle the skipper, though I dared not think what the immediate consequences of a *rencontre* with old Salthorse would be.

On returning to saloon, found tea laid, and the two ladies being vastly entertained by Buskin's conversation. Went to take my place at head of table, but discovered my own chair there in possession of Agrippa: Should like to kic—kiss that dog. Took smaller and uncomfortable chair, and endeavoured to be pleasing in manner whilst requesting Baa Lamb to pour out tea. Afterwards found that I had given mortal offence to Mrs. Gobbledown by not asking *her* to officiate. Gobbledown airily declined tea, without mentioning the fact that directly he came on board he had consumed a large bottle of Allsopp and, later on, a whiskey and soda. Gobbledown quite the sort of man to take all trouble off the shoulders of an anxious host desirous of entertaining his guests, as he answers every question which is asked, no matter whether it is addressed to him or not. Can always hear him all over the ship.

Had to lend my newest silk pyjamas to Buskin, as his luggage had not turned up, even at nine o'clock, when I again sent gig ashore in quest of it. Buskin quite jovial about the matter, though the hands were getting a bit tired of these constant journeys to the shore.

Admiral insisted upon sitting up till midnight. So fatiguing, as I always go to bed at ten. Gobbledown drank four whiskies and sodas, and became argumentative. Buskin recited to us. Never felt so depressed before.

To bed at last, quite worn out.

Next morning at breakfast I suggested getting under way. Mrs. Gobbledown sighed, and said she supposed it couldn't be helped. Thought this hardly cheerful way of commencing cruise. Baa Lamb also sighed, and supposed it was inevitable: Dismal people, these. Both ladies seem to think that yachting consists in lying at anchor in Southampton Water. Admiral observed that he would go on deck, and give skipper a wrinkle or two upon the hoisting of the mainsail. Would sooner have fired a powder magazine myself, and trembled at thought of the explosion that was sure to follow. Gobbledown volunteered to "give 'em a pull on the halliards." Wished he wouldn't, but didn't like to say anything.

Proceeded on deck and had consultation with skipper; we agreed to run down to the Needles, and then return and anchor off Ryde for the night. Met Agrippa, who had annexed the bacon intended for our breakfast an hour or so beforehand. The dog was up in the bows, endeavouring to make the only restitution possible under the circumstances. Directed steward's attention to him, and went below. Gobbledown, in saloon, in act of opening bottle of Bass, though he had hardly finished eating his breakfast. He invited me to share it with him—very hospitable sort of man, Gobbledown, after all. True, it's *my* Bass, but still—Am sure he means well.

On my return to the deck find Admiral and skipper in hot controversy as to whether mainsail should be "ridden down" or hoisted in ordinary way. Endeavour to pacify them. Skipper touches his hat sulkily, and goes forrard, muttering that "these Naval gents thinks they knows everything," whilst Roustabout turns reproachful glance on me and says that it surprises him how any sensible man can employ such a dunder-headed idiot for a skipper. So pleasant, all this. Offer him a cigar, which keeps him quiet for a little.

Then Gobbledown, full of bottled beer and maritime ardour, appears on deck, followed by Buskin. Gobbledown jumps about, treads on Agrippa, who had not up to that period quite completed his disembarking operations, lets go a rope in an unexpected quarter, and brings down a block upon the skipper's head with tremendous violence. Skipper looks unutterable things at him: Anchor got in at last, and mainsail hoisted. Gobbledown rushes to helm, and puts it hard over. Skipper yells frantically to him to "let her come!" Too late, and we graze a schooner lying close to us, grinding half the paint off her quarter as we slip by. Greatest good fortune that we did not sink her at her moorings.

Admiral shrieked out: "Whathedevilare-youat! Why, you son of a sea-cook, you ugly swab of a——"

Rest lost upon Gobbledown, who hurriedly resigned helm and retreated below. We were under way at last, and swishing along towards Netley. Thought I would go down and fetch the ladies up on deck. Knocked softly at door of ladies' cabin.

"I wish you'd take this absurd india-rubber bath out of the cabin, steward,"

came a tart voice from within. "It's always in the way, and I think your master must have been mad to have ever had such a ridiculous thing here. Twice this morning I rolled out of it whilst trying to bathe."

I retreated softly and sent the steward aft.

Just as we emerged from Southampton Water and dipped into the wavelets of the Solent, both ladies came on deck. I got them comfortable wicker chairs, and ten minutes later we went about. "Lee, oh!" called the skipper, and the boom, coming inboard rather suddenly, knocked poor Buskin flat on his face. He scrambled on to his legs again, and tried to look as if he liked it.

The Admiral, standing with feet spread wide apart and hands in pockets, stared at Buskin and then at me.

"Great boom in the timber trade!" said Buskin, thinking to score a joke with this time-honoured chestnut.

Nobody laughed, whilst Mrs. Gobbledown and Baa Lamb looked severely, almost menacingly, at the jester. Gloomy silence ensued. Began to wish I hadn't asked Buskin. He seemed to think he had been specially invited for the purpose of saying something funny, and that knowledge appeared to be oppressing him. All the morning he tried to justify his reputation as a humorist, but his great effort, *i.e.*, inducing the unsuspecting Admiral to sit down upon Agrippa, was not an unqualified success. He relapsed into a gentle melancholy until luncheon time, and then, under the influence of bottled beer, sherry, and a couple of glasses of port, he exclaimed jovially, as he helped Baa Lamb to mint sauce: "Mary had a little lamb!" and was again met by severe frowns from the person addressed and her aunt. After this he devoted himself assiduously to the good things of the table, and spoke no more.

We sailed eastwards until about abreast of Bembridge; turned and ran down to Cowes, and then crossed to Southampton Water again. Enjoyed the trip whenever I managed to get clear of the Admiral's dissatisfaction, Buskin's jokes, Baa Lamb's mute, reproachful eyes, and Gobbledown's blatant voice. But for these drawbacks, really quite a nice day:

As soon as we let go our anchor, I sent gig ashore for letters. Found they had been sent on to Swanage—most vexing this.

Beyond an approach to a row between

Gobbledown and the Admiral at dinner, all passed off smoothly that evening.

Breakfasted alone, and then we got under way, and ran down the West Channel for Swanage. Outside the Needles rather a choppy sea running. Buskin was extra facetious up to this point, and had so far succeeded in his efforts to amuse that I had distinctly smiled twice, whilst even the Admiral condescended to say that he thought him—Buskin—the greatest fool he ever saw. This was praise indeed from such a source.

Encouraged by this, Buskin was about to attempt a practical joke on Gobbledown when he seemed to change his mind—as he certainly did his colour—and ceased his flow of conversation. *Isolde* careened over beautifully as the breeze freshened, and then went right into a big sea with a “smack,” which shook us from stem to stern. When I turned round to shake the water out of my shirt-collar—I felt rather like a rain-water pipe—Buskin had disappeared. In horror I rushed for a lifebuoy, but the Admiral arrested me with the words, jerked out in one unpunctuated grunt:

“Sillifoolsickangoneb’low.”

We saw nothing of the ladies, nor of Buskin, until six o’clock that evening, ten minutes after anchoring in the comparatively smooth water of Swanage Bay. Then, at intervals, appeared three more or less seagreen faces, up the companion.

Buskin was the first to recover his spirits, and after a turn or two on deck unblushingly said that he had enjoyed the sail immensely. Mrs. Gobbledown, more frank, insisted on my sending her and Baa Lamb ashore at once, saying that she had “never been so treated in her life before.” As if I, personally, had been responsible for the choppiness of the sea. Ordered gig, and took them both off without delay. Gobbledown only laughed and said he shouldn’t go ashore, thus deftly letting me in for engaging rooms for the night on behalf of his wife and niece at the hotel.

Walked up to hotel, two of the hands following with dress baskets and other trifles. All rooms engaged. Chartered cab and drove round to other hotel on far side of bay. Secured rooms there, after much parleying. Meantime, my men had gone back to yacht, under impression that I was staying the night ashore. Most annoying this, as when I returned to pier, no boat was available to take me off. Walked

to end of pier, and then saw, to my intense disgust, *Isolde* making her way out of the bay, and turning down for the west. Wind had come on to blow harder, and being now dead on shore, doubtless skipper thought he was not safe lying there. Very right and praiseworthy, and all that—but deucedly annoying at same time. As I knew he would make for Portland, I went into hotel, ordered whiskey and soda, and consulted time-table. Found that by leaving Swanage in half-an-hour I could get to Portland some time before midnight. Not encouraging, but no alternative. Called for letters at post-office, and found they had been sent back to Ryde.

Arrived Portland 11.45 p.m. No chance of getting off to yacht, and had to knock up people at small inn to obtain bed for night. As I had no luggage, was evidently regarded with certain amount of suspicion. No brushes, no sponge, no sleeping garments, no anything at all. Turned in, feeling thoroughly miserable.

Up at six next morning. Determined to go down to the shore, and see if *Isolde* had come in. Met landlord on stairs, who said that as I hadn’t any luggage, he’d be danged if he let me leave the house without paying my bill. Wish looks could have withered this man, but he was apparently unwitherable. Paid in silent disgust and left.

Highly delighted to see *Isolde* at anchor behind breakwater. Bawled: “*Isolde*, ahoy!” until my throat ached. Then, at last they heard me, and sent ashore. So pleased to get on board again that I forgot my past sorrows. Gobbledown—who is secretly afraid of his wife—insisted that we should return to Swanage to fetch the ladies, and although most anxious to get away west I had to consent. Wind blowing half a gale.

“We’re going to have a bit of a dusting getting up to Swanage, ‘specially through the Race,” says the skipper, somewhat lugubriously. “Foul wind all the way, too.”

“Bah!” grunts the Admiral, “call this anything but a capful of wind! Why, when I commanded the old *Ariadne*—”

“Old ‘Arry who?” asks Buskin facetiously, and the Admiral, with a snarl, turns on his heel and goes below.

Well, the skipper was right. We *did* have a “bit of a dusting,” as he put it. I thought the little ship would roll the masts out of her. Harder and harder it blew: Whilst I was in my berth for a minute or

two, she gave one great roll which brought down a perfect shower of tooth-brushes, hair-brushes, nail-brushes, and clothes-brushes about my ears, whilst boots, scissors, combs, and articles of clothing flew all over the cabin. Another roll, quickly followed by a pitch right into it, in which we were fairly "nose under," produced direful sounds from saloon and galley, telling of widespread ruin to the crockery around. Groans from Buskin's berth mingled freely with the shrieking of the wind through our rigging. Luckily we had our topmast housed, three reefs in the mainsail, and only a storm-jib set.

At one o'clock I went below to see what the steward could do for us in the way of luncheon (cooking, with such a sea running, being out of the question). Found Gobbledown seated on floor of saloon tenderly embracing large bottle of Bass, and making frantic efforts to regain possession of corkscrew, which had for the moment eluded him, and slid along the sharply-sloping plane whereon he sat.

Admiral and I slipped and climbed alternately to sofa by swing-table. Gobbledown took chair opposite, and steward, by almost miraculous balancing feat, just avoided standing on his head whilst placing salad, captain's biscuits, jam, and tin of sardines before us.

Dismal sounds from Buskin's berth fully explained that no-longer-mercurial gentleman's absence. Admiral held out tumbler to Gobbledown, who was "engineering" the bottle of claret, and in endeavouring to fill glass Gobbledown lost his footing and shot the claret full into gallant officer's face.

In order to save himself from falling, Gobbledown dropped the bottle and grabbed hold of the swing-table. No yachtsman requires to be told what happened then—away went everything in one wild, awful stampede. The next moment the steward had rushed to the rescue, and the sight that met his eyes was a startling one.

The Admiral, speechless, and gasping for breath, had dropped back on the sofa, dripping claret from all over his head and face, whilst the whole of the sardines and about half the oil pertaining to them had been shot into his lap. Gobbledown, on the other side of what, a minute before,

had been a table, but which was now only an inverted shelf, was sitting in the salad, and rubbing his head with a captain's biscuit. I was endeavouring to rid myself of the generous allowance of jam then plastering the front of my waistcoat. And all three were vigorously shouting for the steward to render us aid.

An hour later, after I had changed and gone on deck, the skipper staggered up to me and shouted in my ear—for the noise of the gale drowned every other sound—"No good goin' on, sir; better give it up, and run back while we can." Last words ominous and made me pause. Felt rather alarmed: "Better up helm and run back, I say," he added grimly. I assented immediately.

Two hours later we had once more passed behind Portland Breakwater and were safe. That night our dinner was of a very sketchy description. Nearly every bit of crockery on board had been smashed. Tinned soup was served out of two teacups. I waited whilst the Admiral used his cup; the steward then took it away, washed it, and brought it in again for me. We were one plate short for the meat, and everybody was in a thoroughly bad humour.

Next morning I arose, my mind big with a bold resolve. After a hurried and secret consultation with the skipper, I said to my guests at breakfast time:

"I am so sorry that our cruise must end here. You see, we got a bit damaged in yesterday's storm and shall have to stay where we are and refit. Later on in the season, perhaps, I may see you all here again—or I may not," I added quietly, to myself.

The Admiral—so frank of him!—at once said that he was not sorry; he felt no confidence sailing with such a fool as my skipper. Buskin, after his second bout of sea-sickness, solemnly swore that nothing should ever tempt him to leave *terra cotta* (Buskin's "jokese" for *terra firma* this) again. Gobbledown alone swore that he would not desert me; but I caused the steward, a little later on, to drop him a hint that the supply of champagne had run out, and that proved quite effectual. He left with the rest.

It will be some time before that party again assembles on board the *Isolde*.

The Dare Plague.

By MARION WARD ARMITAGE.

The story of a school rebellion.

IT was Johnny Howard who planted the first germs, and the plague spread through the entire school with fatal rapidity.

"Ho," observed that intrepid young American one day, "you English don't know what a dare means. Now, in *my* country, what we're dared to do we just do—if it's to jump off a church steeple. Guess you're a set of Mollies, anyhow."

It was only Johnny's popularity that saved him from instant annihilation. As it was, the boys contented themselves with ferocious glances, clenched fists, and black threats of vengeance.

Pilchard Major picked up the flung gauntlet promptly. "Set us the example, Johnny," he said sneeringly.

Johnny stood up, his hands deep down in his trousers pockets.

"Dare, then," he said defiantly.

Pilchard Major thought hard.

"I dare you," he said slowly, "to walk across the long field where Farmer Culter's black bull is!"

Johnny's eyes snapped. "Pooh!" he said, and walked out of the playground whistling.

Farmer Culter's black bull was the fiercest, most dangerous animal in all Surrey. The boys looked at one another in awed silence, Pilchard staring after the retreating back with a frightened expression. Then Scotch Tam flew after Johnny.

"Mon, mon," he cried urgently, "ye munna go. Ye'll be kilt sure."

Johnny stopped whistling. "Dared me," he said airily. "I'm goin'," and went on with his tune.

Scotch Tam laid a beseeching hand on his arm, but Johnnie shook it off and continued his journey.

The school followed the whistling Johnny, and took up its stand in a body at the further end of the hedge that divided the long field from the next. Johnny was apparently oblivious of their presence. He looked

over the high gate calmly, and marked where the black bull stood, beneath the shade of a tree, with its back towards him, motionless save for the swishing tail that swept its fly-bitten sides.

Then he laid hands on the bar and climbed deliberately over.

The school held its breath.

Johnny began to walk gently across.

Slowly the black head, with its formidable horns, turned and surveyed the trespasser. The black body followed.

Johnny continued his way, his hands deep down in his pockets.

The black head lowered ominously and the tail switched angrily. The baleful eyes glared at the schoolboy, and the bull began to sway its huge head to and fro. Johnny was keeping a wary eye on its tactics, and at that danger signal he quickened his pace, still only walking, however.

Suddenly the great beast flung back its head and emitted a roar that sent a shiver down the spine of the entire school, and the next moment Johnny was flying for dear life, the bull in furious pursuit.

The small boys closed their eyes amid a breathless silence, which was suddenly broken with a great shout: "Tam! Tam! Bravo, Tam!"

The small boys opened their eyes with a gasp, expecting they knew not what. There, at the further end of the long field, rushing recklessly to and fro, was brave Scotch Tam, waving a vivid scarlet cloth, and shouting at the top of his voice.

"Coom along, ma beauty, coom, noo do. Dinna be sae shy. Juist coom whiles I pit this bit comforter aroun' your neck. Will na' ye coom, me pretty beastie? Coom along then, I'm fire and pleased to see ye!"

The cloth was enough without the insults; and with an infuriated bellow, forgetting all about his first enemy, the bull swung round and made a charge at the courageous Scot.

Johnny climbed slowly over the high gate, and stood once more in safety amongst his schoolfellows. He looked at Pilchard Major, and Pilchard shriveled beneath his eye. Then, with the school straggling in silent discomfort behind him, he went round and met Tam.

Tam took his outstretched hand and shook it heartily.

"Wasna' it a gude thocht?" he said, beaming. "An' so fine an' easy."

That was the beginning of the plague that infested the school. "Dare and do" was the order of the day.

At first it was all very well, and, except that the usual sports and recreations were terribly neglected, the new craze interfered very little with the school work, and did small harm.

There was a rigid though unwritten law which forbade the daring of a known impossibility; but, unless a thing were known, and proved to be impossible, in the eyes of the boys it was "possibly possible," and, therefore, legal for a dare. And many and fearful were the deeds dared and done by the reckless inmates of Bentham House.

Still, as I said, so long as the plague confined itself strictly to play-hours, and did not break too many limbs, the masters took no notice of the appalling array of black eyes, sprained wrists and ankles, and rainbow-hued bumps and bruises which at that time adorned most of their various classes.

It was only when the plague spread and actually invaded the sacred precincts of class itself that they rose up against it. It was in this way.

One day a bright youth, tired of all the tried "dares," and thirsting after newer and more dangerous waters, suddenly, in a moment of brilliant inspiration, dared his neighbour to send up a blank sheet for his French exercise the following day.

The victim trembled, but could do no other than obey.

The result was one hundred lines for idleness, and detention after school hours to write the neglected exercise.

The satiated soul of Bentham was delighted, and the plague had found fresh ground.

Next Latin class one boy only had learnt his lesson.

Mr. Newman was not to be trifled with.

"Did you forget?" he demanded.

"No, sir," confessed the class.

"Did you have plenty of time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then," he asked slowly, "why did you not learn the lesson I set?"

There was a dead silence.

"Come here, Marsh," he commanded.

Marsh went and stood sheepishly before his desk. Marsh was a model pupil as a rule, and had been drawn into the plague's vortex against his will.

"Why haven't you learnt your lesson?" said Mr. Newman quietly.

Marsh looked him in the eye.

"I was dared not to, sir," he said desperately.

Then Mr. Newman understood.

He looked down the line of boys.

"Were you all dared?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," came unanimously.

"Umph," went on Mr. Newman. He thought a minute. "This time," he said quietly, "I will let you off with a hundred lines and a double lesson for next time, but see that it does not happen again. Now, let me hear over again last week's lesson."

But the flood was easier started than stemmed. Dares had been given and taken, and, perforce, the "dare return" had to be set. So matters grew worse and worse.

Lessons were neglected, exercises undone, irregular hours kept, and rules broken flagrantly, till the masters were in despair. The one and only excuse was: "I was dared, sir," till their souls sickened at the very word.

The climax came when Marsh failed to produce the six hundred lines he had been set for some offence.

It was the Head himself who had set them.

Marsh went up to him almost in tears.

"I was dared not to, sir," he said.

That night the Head called a council of war.

The following morning, after prayers, instead of dismissing the school as usual, the Head called on them to wait one moment, as he had something to say.

"I merely wish to inform you," he said blandly, "that there will be no recreation time this morning, and no half holiday this afternoon—the time can be employed in studying up the first two books of Euclid."

There was an appalled silence for a minute and a half. Boys stared at each other incredulously.

Then a cry went up: "But—sir! Why——"

The Head looked at them regretfully. "I am sorry," he said gently, "but—Mr. Matthews dared me to do it."

Then he dismissed them kindly, and they filed out in dead silence.

As it happened, Mr. Matthews' mathematical class was the first to be held that morning.

"Let me see," he said thoughtfully; "I think, instead of the usual lesson, we will employ our time this morning in devising some nice problems for you to unravel in your spare time to-morrow. Let us first take——"

"Sir!" broke from the class.

Mr. Matthews stood with the chalk suspended between his fingers, surveying the boys blandly.

"You spoke?" he suggested.

"It's not fair, sir!" expostulated Johnny Howard weakly.

Mr. Matthews shook his head.

"I'm sorry," he said pleasantly, "but what could I do? The Head dared me." And he turned round to the board again.

And so it went on throughout the day.

Mr. Newman apologised regretfully for giving his class a thousand lines for no offence, but, as he explained, he was quite guiltless in the matter. Mr. Murison had dared him.

The school felt stupefied.

At dinner-time they found nothing on the table but bread and water. Mrs. St. John looked genuinely unhappy as she falteringly murmured the cook's excuse: The housemaid had dared her.

And so it went on till bedtime came. Then, after prayers, once more the Head detained them. He had a very unpleasant task before him, he told them apologetically,

but the masters had come to him in a body and dared him to flog every boy in the school before prayers on the following day. He knew they would quite understand his feelings and helplessness in the matter, and so—if they would kindly take it in turns next morning, starting with the lowest form, to come to his study——

Then he bade them good-night kindly and dismissed them.

The boys did not go to bed. With one accord they turned and made their way, a subdued and silent band, to the big debating room.

Some of them looked reproachfully at Johnny, and he felt the look.

"Say, boys," he said, with an attempt at briskness, "I guess we're about sick of dares——"

They assented fervently, and waited gloomily for more.

"I'm no ower fond o' them mysel' juist at present," murmured Tam.

"Guess we'd better tell the Head so," said Johnny slowly.

So, under his supervision and direction, the boys drew up a sort of combined declaration, petition, and round robin. In it they promised humbly and faithfully to abolish any and every kind and degree of dare from among them, if in return the Head and staff would do the same, also cancelling the penalty of all those entered into by the staff on that day.

Then they signed it, each one, and went in a body to the doctor's study and delivered it.

The Head granted the petition solemnly. And so was the dare plague exterminated.

❁ ❁ ❁ LOVE'S AVOWAL. ❁ ❁ ❁

"I love you!" When I heard her
I scarce believed my ears;
That she should thus invoke me,
Who'd silent been for years.

"I love you!" Was I dreaming?
I gazed into her face:
The words that I had longed for
Half stunned me for a space.

"I love you!" Naughty Polly!
Where had she learnt that lie?
Some other parrot taught her.
I'll vow it was not I.

"I love you!" She had spoken:
The words came from her heart:
A wondrous joy came o'er me,
Transfixed by Cupid's dart:

I stretched my arms towards her,
And murmured words of love—
At once the traitress pecked me
Right through my brand new glove:

Romances of the Road. ❀ ❀

Highways and byways possess a peculiar fascination, and the best fiction writers of both the past and the present have woven romances round them. The pick of these we are publishing in this feature—they are easily detachable as miniature stories from the rest of the book.

D'ARTAGNAN'S JOURNEY. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

❀ From "*The Three Musketeers*," by ALEXANDER DUMAS.

"*The Three Musketeers*" relates the adventures of Athos, Porthos, Aramis—Musketeers of the Guard of King Louis XIII. of France—and their friend D'Artagnan.

One of the most exciting incidents in the book is the journey of D'Artagnan to England to obtain from the Duke of Buckingham some diamond studs which Anne, Queen of France, had given the Duke as a souvenir, a fact which threatened seriously to compromise her. The King, advised by Cardinal Richelieu, commanded the Queen to wear the studs at a coming ball, and in her anxiety to get them back from Buckingham in time for the ball Anne appealed to D'Artagnan, who undertook to bring them from England. He and his friends started off on their perilous journey, and what happened to them is related in the following thrilling story.

AT two o'clock in the morning our four adventurers left Paris by the barrier St. Denis. . . . All went well till they arrived at Chantilly, which place they reached about eight o'clock in the morning. They stood in need of breakfast, and alighted at the door of an inn, recommended by a sign representing St. Martin giving half his cloak to a beggar. They ordered the lackeys not to unsaddle the horses, and to hold themselves in readiness to set off again immediately.

They entered the common room and seated themselves at a table. A gentleman, who had just arrived by the route of Dam-martin, was seated at the same table, and was taking his breakfast. He began the conversation by talking of rain and fine weather; the travelers replied, he drank to their good health, and the travelers returned his politeness.

But at the moment Mousqueton came to announce that the horses were ready, and as they were rising from the table, the stranger proposed to drink the health of the Cardinal. Porthos replied that he should be delighted, if the stranger in his turn would drink the health of the King. The stranger cried that he acknowledged no other King but his Eminence. Porthos told him he was drunk, and the stranger drew his sword.

"You have committed a foolish act," said Athos, "but it cannot now be helped; there is no drawing back; kill the fellow, and rejoin us as quickly as you can."

And all three mounted their horses, and set out at a good pace, whilst Porthos was promising his adversary to perforate him with all the thrusts known in the fencing schools. . . .

At a league from Beauvais, where the road was confined between two high banks, they fell in with eight or ten men, who, taking advantage of the road being unpaved in this spot, appeared to be employed in digging holes and filling up the ruts with mud.

Aramis, not liking to soil his boots with this artificial mortar, spoke to them rather sharply. Athos tried to restrain him, but it was too late. The labourers began to jeer the travelers, and by their insolence disturbed the equanimity even of the cool Athos, who urged his horse against one of them.

The men all immediately drew back to the ditch, from which each took a concealed musket; the result was that our seven travelers were outnumbered in weapons. Aramis received a ball, which passed through his shoulder, and Mousqueton another ball which lodged in the fleshy part which prolongs the lower portion of the loins.

Mousqueton alone fell from his horse, not because he was severely wounded, but not being able to see the wound, he imagined it to be more serious than it in reality was.

"It is an ambushade!" shouted D'Artagnan, "don't waste a charge! Forward!"

Aramis, wounded as he was, seized the mane of his horse, which carried him on with the others. Mousqueton's horse rejoined them, and galloped by the side of his companions.

"That will serve us for a relay," said Athos.

"I would rather have had a hat," cried D'Artagnan, "mine was carried away by a ball. By my faith, it is very lucky that the letter was not in it."

"Well, but they'll kill poor Porthos, when he comes up," said Aramis.

"If Porthos were on his legs he would have rejoined us by this time," said Athos; "my opinion is that when they came to the point, the drunken man proved sober enough."

They continued at their best speed for two hours, although the horses were so fatigued, that it was to be feared they would soon give out.

The travelers had chosen cross-roads, hoping that they might thus meet with less interruption; but at Crèvecœur, Aramis declared that he could proceed no further. In fact, it required all the courage which he concealed beneath his elegant form and polished manners to bear him so far. He grew every moment paler, and they were obliged to support him on his horse. They lifted him off, at the door of a cabaret, left Bazin with him, who, besides, in a skirmish was more embarrassing than useful, and set forward again in the hope of sleeping at Amiens.

"*Morbleu!*" said Athos, as soon as they were again in motion, "reduced to two masters and Grimaud and Planchet! *Morbleu!* I won't be their dupe, I will answer for it; I will neither open my mouth nor draw my sword between this and Calais: I swear by—"

"Don't waste time by swearing," said D'Artagnan, "let us gallop, if our horses will consent to it."

And the travelers plunged the rowels in their horses' flanks, who, thus vigorously stimulated, recovered their energies. They arrived at Amiens at midnight, and alighted at the auberge of the Golden Lily.

At four o'clock in the morning, there was a terrible riot in the stables. Grimaud had

tried to waken one of the stable-boys, and the stable-boys had set upon him and beaten him. When they opened the window they saw the poor lad lying insensible, with his head split by a blow with a fork-handle.

Planchet went down into the yard, and proceeded to saddle the horses. But they were all knocked up. Mousqueton's horse, which had traveled for five or six hours without a rider the day before, alone might have been able to continue the journey, but, by an inconceivable error, a veterinary surgeon, who had been sent for, as it appeared, to bleed one of the host's horses, had bled Mousqueton's.

This was annoying. All these successive accidents were, perhaps, the result of chance; but they might, quite as possibly, be the fruits of a plot. Athos and D'Artagnan went out, whilst Planchet was sent to inquire if there were not three horses to be sold in the neighbourhood. At the door stood two horses, fresh and strong, and fully equipped. These would just have suited their purpose. He asked where the masters of them were, and was informed that they had passed the night in the auberge, and were then settling with the landlord.

Athos went down to pay the reckoning, whilst D'Artagnan and Planchet stood at the street-door. The host was in a lower and back chamber, to which Athos was asked to go.

Athos entered without the least mistrust, and took out two pistoles to pay the bill. The host was alone, seated before his desk, one of the drawers of which was partly open. He took the money which Athos offered to him, and, after turning and turning it over and over in his hands, suddenly cried out that it was bad, and that he would have him and his companions arrested as coiners.

"You scoundrel!" cried Athos, stepping towards him, "I'll cut your ears off!"

But the host stooped, took two pistols from the half-open drawer, and, pointing them at Athos, shouted for help.

At the same moment, four men, armed to the teeth, entered by side doors, and rushed upon Athos.

"I am taken!" shouted Athos, with all the power of his lungs. "Go on, D'Artagnan, spur! spur!" And he fired two pistols.

D'Artagnan and Planchet did not need to be told this a second time; they unfastened the two horses that were waiting at the door, leapt upon them, buried their spurs in their sides, and set off at a full gallop.

"Do you know what has become of Athos?" asked D'Artagnan of Planchet, as they galloped on.

"Ah, Monsieur," said Planchet, "I saw one fall at each of his shots, and he appeared to me, through the glass door, to be fighting with his sword with the others.

"Brave Athos!" murmured D'Artagnan; "and to think we are forced to leave him, whilst the same fate awaits us perhaps two paces hence! Forward, Planchet, forward! You are a brave fellow!"

At a hundred paces from the gates of Calais, D'Artagnan's horse sank under him, and could not by any means be got up again, the blood flowing from both his eyes and his nose. There still remained Planchet's horse, but, after he stopped, he remained quite still, and could not be urged to move another step forward.

Fortunately, as we have said, they were within a hundred paces of the city; they left their two nags upon the high road, and ran towards the port. Planchet called his master's attention to a gentleman who had just arrived with his lackey, and preceded them by about fifty paces.

They made all speed to come up to this gentleman, who appeared to be in great haste. His boots were covered with dust, and he inquired if he could not instantly cross over to England.

"Nothing would be more easy," said the captain of the vessel ready to set sail; "but this morning an order arrived that no one should be allowed to cross without special permission from the Cardinal."

"I have that permission," said the gentleman, drawing a paper from his pocket; "here it is."

"Have it examined by the governor of the port," said the captain, "and give me the preference."

"Where shall I find the governor?"

"At his country house."

"Where is that situated?"

"At a quarter of a league from the city: Look, you may see it from here—at the foot of that little hill, that slated roof."

"Very well," said the gentleman:

And, with his lackey, he took the road to the governor's country house.

D'Artagnan and Planchet followed the gentleman at a distance, not to be noticed, but when he was out of the city, D'Artagnan quickly came up with him, just as he was entering a little wood:

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "you appear to be in a great hurry?"

"No one can be more so, Monsieur."

"I am sorry for that," said D'Artagnan; "for, as I am in a great hurry, I wished to beg you to do me a service."

"What is that?"

"To let me go first."

"That is impossible," said the gentleman; "I have traveled sixty leagues in forty-four hours, and by to-morrow, at mid-day, I must be in London."

"I have performed the same distance in forty hours, and by to-morrow, at ten o'clock in the morning, I must be in London."

"Very sorry, Monsieur; but I was here first, and will not go second."

"I am sorry too, Monsieur; but I arrived second, and will go first."

"The King's service!" said the gentleman.

"My own service!" said D'Artagnan.

"But it seems to me that this is a needless quarrel you are fastening upon me."

"*Parbleu!* What do you desire it to be?"

"What do you want?"

"Would you like to know?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I want that order of which you are the bearer, seeing that I have not one of my own, and must have one."

"You are joking, I should think."

"I never joke."

"Let me pass!"

"You shall not pass."

"My brave young man, I will blow out your brains. Here, Lubin! Give me my pistols!"

"Planchet," called out D'Artagnan, "you can settle the lackey; I will manage the master."

Planchet, emboldened by the first exploit, sprang upon Lubin, and, being strong and vigorous, he soon got him on the broad of his back, and placed his knee upon his breast:

"Go on with your business, Monsieur," cried Planchet, "I have finished mine."

On seeing this, the gentleman drew his sword, and sprang upon D'Artagnan; but he had more than he expected to deal with.

In three seconds, D'Artagnan had wounded him three times, exclaiming at each thrust:

"One for Athos! One for Porthos! And one for Aramis!"

At the third hit the gentleman fell heavily to the ground.

D'Artagnan believed him to be dead, or at least insensible, and went towards him for the purpose of taking the order, but at the moment he stretched out his hand to search for it, the wounded man, who had not

dropped his sword, plunged the point into his breast, crying :

"And one for you !"

"And one for me ! The best for the last !" cried D'Artagnan, in a rage, pinning him to the earth with a fourth thrust through his body.

This time the gentleman closed his eyes and fainted. D'Artagnan searched his pockets, and took from one of them the order for the passage. It was in the name of the Count de Wardes.

Then, casting a glance on the handsome young man, who was scarcely twenty-five years of age, and whom he was leaving in his blood, senseless, and perhaps dead, he gave a sigh for that unaccountable destiny which leads men to destroy each other for the interests of people who are strangers to them, and who often are not even aware that they exist.

But he was soon roused from his reflections by Lubin, who uttered loud cries, and screamed for help with all his might.

Planchet seized him by the throat, and pressed as hard as he could.

"Monsieur," said he, "as long as I hold him in this manner, he can't cry, I know ; but as soon as I leave go he will howl again as loudly as ever. I have found out that he's a Norman, and Normans are all obstinate."

In fact, tightly held as he was, Lubin endeavoured to get out a cry.

"Stay !" said D'Artagnan, and, taking out his handkerchief, he gagged him.

"And now," said Planchet, "we will bind him to a tree."

This being securely done, they drew the Count de Wardes close to his servant ; and as night was approaching, and the wounded man and the bound man were at some little distance within the wood, it was evident they were likely to remain there till the next day.

"And now," said D'Artagnan, "to the governor's house."

And they both set forward as fast as they could towards the country house of the worthy functionary.

The Count de Wardes was announced, and D'Artagnan was introduced.

"You have an order, signed by the Cardinal ?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan ; "it is here."

"It appears that his Eminence is anxious to prevent someone from crossing to England ?"

"Yes ; a certain D'Artagnan, a Bearnese gentleman, who left Paris, in company of three of his friends, with the intention of going to London."

"Do you know him personally ?" asked the governor.

"Whom ?"

"This D'Artagnan."

"Oh, yes, thoroughly."

"Describe him to me, then."

"That will be very simple."

And D'Artagnan gave, feature for feature, and in every point, the most accurate description of the Count de Wardes.

"Is he accompanied by anyone ?"

"Yes, by a lackey named Lubin."

"We will keep a sharp watch for them, and if we lay hands upon them, his Eminence may be assured they shall be reconducted to Paris under a good escort."

The governor signed the passport, and delivered it to D'Artagnan, who lost no time in useless compliments, but thanked the governor, bowed, and departed.

When once out, he and Planchet set off as quickly as they could, and, by taking another road, avoided the wood, and re-entered the city by a different gate.

The vessel was quite ready to sail, and the captain waiting in the port.

"Well ?" said he, on seeing D'Artagnan :

"Here is my pass, examined," said the latter.

"And that other gentleman ?"

"He will not go to-day," said D'Artagnan, "but here, I'll pay you for both of us."

"In that case we will start," said the captain.

"Yes, as soon as you please," replied D'Artagnan.

He leapt with Planchet into the boat, and in five minutes they were on board.

At ten o'clock the vessel anchored in the port of Dover, and at half-past ten D'Artagnan placed his foot on English soil, crying :

"Here I am at last !"

But that was not all, they had yet to get to London. In England the post was well served ; D'Artagnan and Planchet took post-horses with a postillion, who rode before them ; and in a few hours arrived in the capital.

D'Artagnan knew nothing of London, he could not speak one word of English, but he wrote the name of Buckingham on a piece of paper, and everyone to whom he showed it pointed out to him the way to the Duke's hotel.

The Duke was at Windsor hunting with the King.

D'Artagnan inquired for the confidential valet of the Duke : : : told him that he had come from Paris, on an affair of the utmost importance, and that he must speak with his master instantly.

The confidence with which D'Artagnan spoke convinced Patrick, which was the name of the valet. He ordered two horses to be saddled, and himself went as guide to the young guardsman. : : :

On their arrival at the castle they inquired for the Duke, and learnt that he and the King were hawking in the marshes.

They were quickly on the spot named, and . . . Patrick informed the Duke that a messenger was waiting for him.

"No misfortune has befallen the Queen?" cried Buckingham, the instant he came up.

"I believe not; and yet I believe her to be in some great danger from which your Grace alone can save her."

"I!" cried Buckingham. "What is it? I should be only too happy to be of any service to her! Speak! Speak!"

"Take this letter," said D'Artagnan.

"This letter! From whom does it come?"

"From Her Majesty, to the best of my belief."

"From Her Majesty!" said Buckingham, becoming so pale that D'Artagnan thought he would faint. And he broke the seal.

"What is this rent!" said he, showing D'Artagnan a hole where it had been pierced.

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I did not see that; it was the weapon of the Count de Wardes that made that when he thrust it into my chest."

"Are you wounded?" asked Buckingham, as he tore open the letter.

"Oh! Nothing!" said D'Artagnan, "only a scratch."

"Good Heavens! What do I read?" cried the Duke. "Patrick remain here, or rather, find the King, wherever he may be, and tell His Majesty that I implore him to excuse me, as an affair of the greatest importance calls me to London. Come, sir, come!" And both rode off towards the capital at full speed.

DR. SYNTAX AND THE HIGHWAYMEN.

From "Dr. Syntax," by WILLIAM COMBE.

(Published by Chatto & Windus.)

The rhyming story of "The Schoolmaster," or, as we now call it, "Doctor Syntax," appeared in the first monthly number of *The Poetical Magazine*, May, 1810. Rowlandson, the artist, had made some sketches representing an old scholastic clergyman abroad in search of the picturesque, and it was decided that these would suit the magazine very well if some verses could be written to accompany them. Mr. William Combe, a brilliant society satirist, was asked to contribute one set of verses a month to illustrate one of the drawings. The result was the famous "Doctor Syntax," which became the literary rage of the day. Everything was called "Syntax"—hats, coats, wigs, and cravats—in fact, it became the popular title. The series comprised a kind of commentary upon current events, and made an immediate hit.

Combe used to pin up the monthly sketch on a screen in his room in the King's Bench, and write off the verses as they were wanted. The following extract describes how Dr. Syntax is stopped by highwaymen at the onset of his tour:

Grizzle again he soon bestrode,
And wav'd his whip and off he rode :
But all around was dingy green,
No spire arose, no town was seen:
At length he reach'd a beaten road ;
How great the joy the sight bestowed !
So on he went in pleasant mood,
And shortly gain'd a stately wood,
Where the refreshing zephyrs play'd
And cool'd the air beneath the shade.
Oh ! what a change, how great the treat,
To fanning breeze from sultry heat !
But, ah ! how false is human joy !

When least we think it, ills annoy :
For now, with fierce, impetuous rush,
Three ruffians issued from a bush ;
One Grizzle stopp'd and seiz'd the reins,
While they all threat the Doctor's brains:
Poor Syntax, trembling with affright,
Resists not such superior might,
But yields him to their savage pleasure,
And gives his purse, with all its treasure
Fearing, howe'er, the Doctor's view
Might be to follow and pursue ;
The cunning robbers wisely counted
That he, of course, should be dismounted ;

And still that it would safer be,
If he were fastened to a tree.
Thus to a tree they quickly bound him ;
The cruel cords went round and round him :
And, having of all power bereft him,
They tied him fast—and then they left him.

By the road side, within the wood,
In this sad state poor Syntax stood ;
His bosom heav'd with many a sigh,
And the tears stood in either eye.
What could he do ? He durst not bawl,
His noise the robbers might recall :
The villains might again surround him,
And hang him up where they had bound him.
Sure never was an hapless wight
In more uncomfortable plight ;
Nor was this all ; his pale was bare,
Unshelter'd by one lock of hair :
For when the sturdy robbers took him,
His hat and peruke both forsook him.
The insect world were on the wing,
Whose talent is to buzz and sting ;
And soon his bare-worn head they sought,
By instinct led, by Nature taught ;
And dug their little forks within
The tender texture of his skin.

He rag'd and roar'd, but all in vain,
No means he found to ease his pain ;
The cords, which to the tree had tied him
All help from either hand denied him :
He shook his head, he writh'd his face
With painful look, with sad grimace,
And thus he spoke his hapless case !

" Ah ! miserable man," he cried,
" What perils do my course betide !
In this sad, melancholy state,
Must I, alas ! impatient wait,
Till some kind soul shall haply find me,
And with his friendly hands unbind me ?
Nay, I throughout the night may stay,
'Tis such an unfrequented way :
Tho' what with hunger, thirst, and fright,
I ne'er shall last throughout the night ;
And could I e'en these ills survive,
The flies will eat me up alive.
What mad ambition made me roam !
Ah ! wherefore did I quit my home ?
For there I liv'd remote from harm ;
My meals were good, my house was warm ;
And, though I was not free from strife,
With other ills that trouble life,
Yet I had learn'd full well to bear
The nightly scold, the daily care ;
And, after many a season past,
I should have found repose at last :
Fate would have sign'd my long release,
And Syntax would have died in peace ;

Nor thus been robb'd, and tied, and beaten,
And all alive by insects eaten."

But while he thus at Fate was raving,
And Fortune's angry frown bewailing,
A dog's approaching bark he hears ;
'Twas sweet as music to his ears ;
And soon a sure relief appears.
For, tho' it bore that gen'ral form,
Which oft at home foretold a storm,
It now appear'd an angel's shape
That promis'd him a quick escape :
Nor did La Mancha's val'rous Knight,
Feel greater pleasure at the sight,
When overwhelm'd with love and awe,
His Dulcinea first he saw :
For on two trotting palfreys came,
And each one bore a comely dame :
They started as his form they view ;
The horses also started too ;
The dog with insult seem'd to treat him,
And look'd as if he long'd to eat him.
In piteous tones he humbly pray'd
They'd turn aside, and give him aid :
When each leap'd quickly from her seat,
To join in charitable deed.
They drew their knives to cut the noose,
And let the mournful pris'ner loose ;
With kindest words his fate bewail,
While grateful Syntax tells his tale.

The rustic matrons soothe his grief,
Nor offer, but afford relief ;
And, turning from the beaten road,
Their well-lin'd panniers they unload ;
When soon upon the bank appear'd
A sight his fainting spirits cheer'd :
They spread the fare with cheerful grace,
And gave a banquet to the place.
Most haply, too, as they untied him,
He saw his hat and wig beside him :
So, thus bewigg'd and thus behatted,
Down on the grass the Doctor squatted ;
When he uplifted either eye,
With grateful accents to the sky.
"'Tis thus," he humbly said, " we read
In sacred books of heavenly deed :
And thus, I find in my distress,
The Manna of the Wilderness :
'Tis Hermit's fare ; but, thanks to Heaven,
And those kind souls, by whom 'tis given."
'Tis true that bread, and curds, and fruit,
Do with the pious Hermit suit ;
But Syntax surely was mistaken
To think their meals partake of bacon ;
Or that those reverend men regale,
As our good Doctors do—with ale ;
And these kind dames, in nothing loath,
Took care that he partook of both.

At length 'twas time to bid adieu,
And each their diff'rent way pursue !
A kind farewell, a kiss as kind,
He gave them both with heart and mind :
Then off he trudg'd, and, as he walk'd
Thus to himself the Parson talk'd :
" 'Tis well, I think, it is no worse
For I have only lost my purse :
With all their cruelty and pains,
The rogues have got but trifling gains ;
Poor four-and-fourpence is the measure
Of all their mighty pilfer'd treasure ;
For haply there was no divining
I'd a snug pocket in my lining ;
And, thanks to Spousy, ev'ry note
Was well sew'd up within my coat :
But where is Grizzle ? Never mind her,
I'll have her cried, and soon shall find her."
Thus he pursued the winding way,
Big with the evils of the day :
Though the good Doctor kept in view
The favour of its blessings too.
Nor had he pac'd it half-an-hour
Before he saw a parish tow'r,
And soon, with sore fatigue oppress'd,
An Inn receiv'd him as its guest.
But still his mind with anxious care,
Ponder'd upon his wand'ring mare ;
He, therefore, sent the Bellman round
To see if Grizzle might be found.

Grizzle, ungrateful to her master,
And careless of his foul disaster,
Left him tied up and took her way,
In hopes to meet with corn or hay ;
But, as that did not come to pass,
She sought a meadow full of grass :
The farmer in the meadow found her,
And order'd John, his man, to pound her :
Now John was one of those droll folk,
Who oft take mischief for a joke ;
And thought 'twould make the master stare,
When he again beheld his mare.
(Perhaps the Gem'man might be shock'd)
To find her ready cropt and doct :
At all events, he played his fun,
No sooner was it said than done :
But Grizzle was a patient beast,
And minded nought if she could feast :
Like many others, prone to think,
The best of life was meat and drink ;
Who feel to-day nor care nor sorrow,
If they are sure to feast to-morrow.
Thus Grizzle, as she pac'd around
The purlieu of the barren pound—
In hungry mood might seem to neigh—
" If I had water, corn, and hay,
I should not thus my fate bewail,
Nor mourn the loss of ears or tail."

In the meantime, securely hoos'd,
The Doctor booz'd it, and carous'd.
The hostess spread her fairest cheer,
Her best beefsteak, her strongest beer,
And sooth'd him with her winning chat,
Of " Pray eat this—and now take that.
Your Rev'ence, after all your fright,
Wants meat and drink to set you right."
His Rev'ence prais'd the golden rule,
Nor did he let his victuals cool :
And, having drank his liquor out
He took a turn to look about ;
When to the folks about the door
He told the dismal story o'er.

The country-people on him gaz'd,
And heard his perils all amaz'd ;
How the thieves twin'd the cords around him,
How to a tree the villains bound him !
What angels came to his relief,
To loose his bonds, and soothe his grief !
His loss of cash, and what was worse.
His saddle, saddle-bags, and horse.
Thus as their rude attention hung
Upon the wonders of his tongue,
Lo ! Grizzle's altered form appears,
With half its tail, and half its ears !

" Is there no law ? " the Doctor cries.
" Plenty," a Lawyer straight replies :
" Employ me, and those thieves shall swing
On gallows-tree, in hempen-string :
And, for the rogue, the law shall flea him,
Who maim'd your horse, as now you see him."
" No," quoth the Don, " your pardon pray,
I've had enough of thieves to-day :
I've lost four shillings and a groat,
But you would strip me of my coat ;
And ears and tail won't fatten you,
You'll want the head and carcase too."
He chuckled as he made the stroke,
And all around enjoy'd the joke ;
But still it was a sorry sight
To see the beast in such a plight.

Yet what could angry Syntax do ?
'Twas all in vain to fret and stew .
His well stuff'd bags, with all their hoard
Of sketching-tools, were safe restor'd .
The saddle, too, which he had sought,
For small reward was quickly brought ;
He, therefore, thought it far more sage
To stop his threats and check his rage ;
So to the hostler's faithful care
He gave his mutilated mare ;
And while poor Grizzle, free from danger,
Cropp'd the full rack and clean'd the manger,
Syntax, to ease his aching head,
Smok'd out his pipe, and went to bed.

An Old Bachelor of Arts.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ By MIRIAM MICHELSON.

An American story, in which an old man's will causes a great commotion.

"AND all the rest of my property I bequeath in equal shares to Margaret Thorley, of West Philadelphia, only daughter of my dead sister, and to Morton Hale, of El Paso, Texas, eldest son of my cousin Morton. Provided:

"1. That for a period of three consecutive months within a year following my death these two shall dine every day in each other's company.

"2. That they shall never become engaged to or marry each other.

"In the event of their failing to comply literally and implicitly with these conditions, I direct that the sealed codicil to my will be opened and my estate administered according to its terms. If the conditions are fulfilled in good faith the codicil is to be burnt unopened in the presence of witnesses.

"My purpose in making this disposition of my property is not to confirm my friends' impression of an old bachelor's eccentricity, but to test the notion that mere propinquity is enough to bring about a union between young people, and to protest against the manner in which the nucleus of my property came to me. "JARED HALE."

"How did his property come to him?" asked Morton Hale, lifting his eyes from the queer document, the whole of it in the crabbed handwriting of a very old man.

Margaret Thorley blushed. Her pretty face had been a theatre of emotions ever since she had handed this recently-arrived young Texan her Uncle Jared's will.

"He—you know his own father made just such a will," she explained, "except that the two people mentioned were required to marry."

"Good nerve—that!" The Texan watched the play of colour over the girl's fair skin with a naïve sort of pleasure. "And who was the girl?"

"I thought you knew—your mother, Mr. Hale."

"Phew!" And she, the plucky little body—

"Fell in love with your father and forfeited the fortune."

The Texan's keen blue eyes, so startling a contrast to his tanned face, dwelt upon the beauty of the grounds about this old mansion, but he saw only an empty chair in a cottage down in a little town on the Rio Grande.

"Do not judge Uncle Jared harshly," said the girl.

"I hadn't thought of him. But he doesn't show up very fine, does he? Blamed if I'd like the sight of myself after I'd taken the money a girl lost by sticking to the man she cared for!"

"She was a—a bit hot-headed herself, they say, in those days," Miss Thorley said rather primly. "And Uncle Jared was wounded by her attributing the most sordid motives to him, while as a matter-of-fact he really—loved her—and was —"

"And was quite ready to love to order. No wonder she despised him—a woman like that! She never changed. She was brave and straight as a man to the end; nothing crooked, nothing weak about her!"

The girl's chin went up. The quick, resenting gesture showed her round, young throat lifting like a flower's stem from the mass of muslin and lace that bedded it.

"I'm very like Uncle Jared." There was a challenge in the girl's voice.

"In that you'll follow instructions as to whom you'll love or not love?" he demanded.

She flushed indignantly under his twinkling eyes.

"Well," he went on, without waiting for her answer, "I'm afraid I shall be like my mother in this, too. It's not unlikely that I'll resent your uncle's meddling in my affairs, his gift with the impertinent string to it, by falling desperately in love with the very—"

"You'll pardon me," interrupted the girl stiffly, rising as she spoke. "I have promised Mrs. Mygatt, my old friend, whose sudden attack of neuralgia prevented her from welcoming you, to read to her this afternoon. We thought it best, she and I, to invite you to spend these three months with us here at the old place in order that you might more conveniently fulfil Uncle Jared's stipulation as to our dining together. But, of course, we have no desire to take up your time apart from a strict interpretation of what my uncle asks of us. We have given you Uncle Jared's own rooms. I

hope you will find them comfortable. Perkins will show you to them. We dine at seven. Till then——”

She nodded and passed into the house, leaving him alone upon the broad stone verandah.

He leant back in the rocking-chair, following with his eyes the last lace-edged ruffle that billowed after her. Then he got up, stretched his long, lean body, sprang down the steps two at a time, out through the grounds, and took the first tram bound citywards.

It was from there, from a cheap restaurant in Chestnut Street, that a telephone message came to Miss Thorley late that afternoon.

“Miss Thorley? Yes. This is Morton Hale,” she heard. The wire seemed to have imparted a rather sardonic tone to the Texan’s big voice. “I want you to come into town and have dinner with me here at the Dennison, and——”

“Where?” Margaret’s voice was incredulous.

“At the Dennison.”

“But I never dine at the Dennison, and, besides——”

“But I do. It seems a jolly, cosy little place, with not too much style. Do come. Bring your friend, the old lady, if it’s the proper thing.”

“Thank you—thank you exceedingly, both for myself and for Mrs. Mygatt.” The girl’s voice was sarcastically sweet. “But as we have arranged to dine at home we couldn’t possibly——”

“Then you won’t come?” came in good-natured tones over the wire. “Sorry. Good-bye.”

Margaret was still sitting chained to her chair by astonishment when Mrs. Mygatt entered. Then the girl jammed the receiver on the hook and flew to her friend.

“Of course he’s nothing but a cowboy, Peggy,” said the old lady soothingly. “He does not know how to behave. I will see him and talk to him at the first opportunity. There, there, dearie, don’t fret. We’ll sail the very day the three months are up, and you need never be bothered with him again.”

But Mrs. Mygatt’s opportunity did not come immediately. Young Hale had all the world of the East to see, and it was not till the end of the week that she found him writing a letter in old Jared’s library.

She was a very active, white-haired little lady, with a round, pink face, and pretty, old, grey eyes. She spoke at length to the

Texan, though she was surprised and mollified at the manner of his reception of her.

“Shall I say to Miss Thorley that we are to have the pleasure of your company at dinner to-night?” she concluded forgivingly.

“Say to Miss Thorley, if you will be so good, Mrs. Mygatt,” he responded pleasantly, as he held the door open for her, “that I shall always be happy to discuss with her any matter that interests her.”

Mrs. Mygatt gasped and fled.

“You’ll have to arrange it with him yourself, Peggy,” she said, after reporting her own failure.

“Not I!” Margaret’s chin lifted aggressively.

Early the next morning Margaret was out in the hedged-in rose-garden, when she came upon the Texan smoking his pipe beneath her favourite rainbow rose. She flushed with anger at finding him there, with confusion at appearing before him in a kimono.

“It’s a pity,” he drawled, putting away the pipe, “that a man can’t have the best two things on earth at the same time.”

“Don’t disturb yourself on my account,” she said disdainfully, “I’m going right in. And you will not be interrupted. No one comes here except myself.”

He smiled at the tart little sting, bent and pulled a rose and held it towards her as though he were trying its effect against the soft folds that made a V at her throat. “It would look mighty pretty there,” he said impersonally.

But she turned away as though she hadn’t heard.

“I say,” he drawled, fastening the rose philosophically in the lapel of his coat while he walked on beside her, “don’t you think you’re overdoing instructions? Old Jared didn’t order you to hate me.”

“And doesn’t it occur to you,” she flared back, “that you’re outdoing even your mother? She only forfeited her own share of the property, although I don’t doubt——”

He looked quickly down at her, and she caught his eye’s flash as she looked up.

“It isn’t—becoming in a soft, pretty little thing like you to use that tone in speaking to a man of his mother,” he said gravely, and turned up an alley of pink roses, that led to old Jared’s wing.

It was a delightful sound that stopped him—the soft rustle of muslin skirts, the swift, light fall of slippers, the quick breathing of a remorseful, girlish heart.

"I—beg your pardon—truly," she panted, holding out her hand.

He took it in both of his. "Do you care so all-fired much for this money?" he demanded.

"Ye-es, I think I do. Why shouldn't I? You do yourself, or you wouldn't have come on here all the way from Texas, would you?"

He dropped her hand. "No—of course—that's why I came. It could not be any other reason, could it?"

"I can't imagine any other," she said distantly. Then she added: "And this being the case, I fail to understand why you don't begin to fulfil the will's conditions. The sooner we begin the three months the sooner we shall be at liberty to do as we please. I'm going abroad afterwards. Are you going back to Texas?" she asked.

He did not answer for a moment. "What is the use of beginning the three months? we'll never finish them," he said at last.

"I don't see why not."

"Just because you'll balk."

"Balk! Why, I consider it a very easy condition."

"If it's done your way."

"I'm sure," she began, "I never thought—"

"That's just it. You took it all for granted and put me in my place at the start. I was to put on a Tuxedo and be as near a swell as I could manage. Well, I won't. All the money in this big brick city won't tempt me to make a donkey of myself for a girl that thinks she's made of different 'dobe than I. If I'm to go out of my way, it'll do you a mighty lot of good to go out of yours half the time. You don't know anything of the world but its swells and snobs. If you're ready to meet me half-way we'll begin the three-months' scheme. If you're not, the money can go to—Jericho. I'm going back to Texas. Good-bye."

He had his trunk almost packed when her note came.

"I'm ready," it read. "Do you insist upon my making the first concession, or will you dine with us to-night? It will be a favour, for I have invited friends."

On his way down that evening he met her in the hall. She was all in white and lace-like loveliness."

"I don't know," he said softly, "how I dared bully you. You take my breath away."

"They give rather downright compliments in Texas, don't they?" she murmured.

"It depends on the provocation," he replied.

The next day they dined at the Dennison with Mrs. Mygatt, who rose with a sigh of relief when the meal was ended.

From Miss Thorley, though, no sign of dissatisfaction came as the weeks went by. She even began to take pleasure in the novelty of the entertainment the Texan provided on the alternate days when he was host. They went out to a suburb to an old-style farmhouse dinner. They invaded a skimpy little boarding-house. They were guests at a "family dinner" on the top floor of a great department store where the meal was shared by the shopgirls. They went down to the shore and dined at an inn famous for its planked shad and the Bohemian company that affected it. They went for a tram ride out of town and picnicked in the woods. And Mrs. Mygatt followed patiently, looking upon these aberrations as alternate nightmares sandwiched in between blissful culinary dreams.

She fell asleep sitting bolt upright against a shapely birch that evening out in the forest, and Miss Thorley and the Texan spread a steamer rug over her feet and left her there with the sundust sifting through the lace-like, leafy greenness upon her silvered head.

There was a charm for the young Southerner in the soft warmth of the sundown, in the new sylvan beauty of Eastern woods, in being alone with this girl—the one in the world set apart from him. He followed her as in a dream, gathering the violets, the quaker-ladies, the primroses, the dogwood to which she merrily introduced him. But his dream was broken and he felt a pang of exquisite terror when he heard a cry and saw her, a few feet ahead, slip down the steep bank that rose from the stream.

When she opened her eyes after a few moments' unconsciousness she smiled up at him bending over her, and sat up shivering. He put his coat about her.

"You're not hurt, are you?" he cried.

Something in his tone sent the blood dancing through her veins. "How quick you must have been," she murmured, "to—have saved me." She put out both her hands and he caught them in his, chafing them tenderly.

It was this tableau that Mrs. Mygatt, waking and seeking her charge, came upon.

"The thing to do is to hurry back to town," she said sharply.

But the Texan had sprained his ankle in his quick leap after Miss Thorley, and it was very late that night when they arrived home.

Margaret came in to him the next evening while he was lying on the couch in old Jared's library, followed by the imperturbable Perkins carrying a tray.

"Dinner is served, Mr. Hale," she said, a note of laughter in her voice despite its hoarseness. "Mrs. Mygatt is coming, and we'll dine *en famille*, though you haven't sent us an invitation."

"You've taken cold," he said, pulling himself up. "And you are a forgiving saint to come to me. They told me you were in bed. Why did you get up?"

"To fulfil Uncle Jared's condition, of course," she said. She was arranging the flowers and spreading the cloth on the table beside him.

He took the blossoms out of her hand and held it tight. "Only that?" he whispered. "Was it only that?"

Her eye wavered and the colour shot to her cheek.

"Perkins!" shouted the Texan. "Get out of here!"

When Mrs. Mygatt came in Hale was saying: "It's only a cottage we'll have, Peggy, but when it gets too small to hold our happiness we'll get out under the Texan sky and shout it to the stars."

"You need not shout it to the servants, Mr. Hale," said the old lady severely.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered, while Margaret jumped up all ablush. "A miracle like this—fancy just the sweetest thing in girls the Lord has created giving up a fortune for a fellow like me!"

"She's a goose," said Mrs. Mygatt.

"Isn't she?" he laughed, reaching out to grasp the old lady's hand. "Congratulate me."

"I do," she grumbled, "but——"

"But think what he's giving up for me, dear Mrs. Mygatt," interrupted Margaret softly.

She was standing by old Jared's desk. She opened the drawer and took out a sealed envelope. "It's the codicil," she said, with a smile and a sigh, breaking the seal. "I'll read it to you:

"I, Jared Hale, herewith revoke all other wills made by me and leave all my property to——"

"Oh!" The girl's voice faltered. She looked appealingly at Mrs. Mygatt, dropped the document in the old lady's lap, and fled from the room.

"Oh, where are my glasses?" cried the old lady. "There!" She handed the paper to Hale. "For pity's sake read it to me!"

"To Margaret Thorley and Morton Hale in trust," he began slowly—"in trust for——"

"Oh, ha! ha! ha!" He fell back upon the couch, his laughter filling the room.

"I believe you're both mad," ejaculated Mrs. Mygatt.

"No—listen and see how sane we are," he said, recovering.

"In trust," it says, 'for the son they will name Jared Thorley Hale, after the man who brought them together.'

"Oh, the artful old bachelor! Bless him—we shall name a dozen sons after him."

The old lady's face was softly pink. She took Hale's hand and stroked it gently. "I am so glad," she said—"so glad I—I really don't know what to do."

"Do? There's only one thing to do. Get Peggy to come back here this minute!" pleaded the Texan. "The saucy girl's taking advantage of a poor man's bad ankle. Tell her if she doesn't come to me I'll break it over again, but I'll get to her!"

THIS IS LIFE.

A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the means come
double;
And that is life!

A crust and a corner that love makes precious,
With the smile to warm and the tears to
refresh us;
And joy seems sweeter when cares come after,
And a moan is the finest of foils for laughter;
And that is life!

Books in Brief. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

The gist of a novel in the form of a short story—this is our idea of a popular review. Our selection this month consists of (1) "The Way of the Spirit," by H. Rider Haggard, whose name will be handed down to posterity as the author of "King Solomon's Mines" and "She," and many other popular romances; and (2) "The Only World," by G. B. Burgin, whose best known work is, perhaps, "The Shutters of Silence."

THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

(Hutchinson & Co. 6s.)

I.

ONE very dreary day in late September, Rupert Ullershaw, after an absence of nearly twelve years in India and Egypt, again set foot on English soil: He had made one mistake in his life, twelve years ago, and he had spent the rest of his days in striving to attain the way of the spirit rather than the way of the flesh. Lady Devene was dead now, presumably from an overdose of chloral, and no one but her husband and Rupert knew that the former had forced her to take it to avoid discovery of her intrigue with Rupert. Devene had married again in order to leave an heir behind him. Failing this heir, Rupert succeeded to everything.

Failing Rupert's succession, the estates went to that disreputable scapegrace, Dick Learner. Learner acted as Devene's secretary, and aspired to a seat in the House. He also made love to his beautiful cousin Edith, who, in spite of her infatuation for him, was not blind to his vices.

Devene, for reasons of his own, wanted Edith to marry Rupert. Yet she hesitated much, for Life's good things must be bought at the price of Rupert's company. Then Rupert proposed to her when they were staying together at Devene, and she hesitated no longer.

II.

DICK LEARNER was talking to Lord Southwick, the head of the Foreign Office, two days before Rupert's marriage. "Rather a pity," said his lordship, "Ullershaw's going to be married. A man is wanted who knows those rascally Arab sheiks who live about the frontier of Waddy Halfa—secret

service mission to get round them privately. The officer sent must be thoroughly acquainted with Arabic."

"When would he have to start?" asked Dick.

"At once; the thing is urgent."

Dick thought a moment. "My cousin Ullershaw is a curious fellow, and I am not by any means certain that he would let his marriage stand in the way of duty, if it were put to him like that. Why don't you give him the chance? It would be kind of you. Send for him and ask him. I shall take it as a favour, if you don't mention my name in connection with this matter."

Rupert was sent for and accepted, but Edith declined to go with him. And he left for Egypt without the slightest suspicion that Dick had been the means of sending him there a few hours after his marriage.

III.

SIX weeks after bidding farewell to his wife, Rupert, disguised as an Arab, found himself once more upon the banks of the Nile, staring in the moonlight at the colossal statues which sit upon the façade of Abu Simbel. He began to doze, but was awakened by the sound of feet moving over sand, and saw two figures glide past him into the recesses of a temple. On the square, solid altar stood a lamp, the light from which fell upon the figures of two women on either side of the line of gods.

One was an old gipsy, Bakhita, whom Rupert had met before. The other was a young woman, small, slender, but beautifully fashioned, and so light in colour as to be almost white. In one hand she held a bowl of glass, and in the other a jar of alabaster,

and from the jar she poured a libation into the bowl and offered it to the god Harmachis.

Rupert thrust himself further forward. Bakhita heard the noise and turned, knife in hand. "Bakhita, it is I," said Rupert.

Bakhita was satisfied, and explained that her companion, Mea, who had been educated at the Mission School at Luxor, was in great danger. An old enemy of Rupert, Sheik Ibrahim, of the Sweet Wells, wanted her in marriage, and was planning to capture her before she could get back to her own people. If Rupert would allow them to travel with him for two days, they could get into the Tebu Desert to the oasis of Tama where Mea reigned.

After some hesitation Rupert consented: Bakhita and Mea were to join his party half-an-hour after moonrise the next night:

IV.

A FEW nights later, the party was followed by Sheik Ibrahim's band. The Sheik had an old quarrel with Rupert, and meant to secure Mea. "Resist me," he said to Rupert, "and I will take all your goods and offer to you, infidel, the choice between death and Islam."

"Empty drums make a loud noise," retorted Rupert contemptuously, and the Arab's spear missed him by a hair's breadth.

Fortunately, Mea and Bakhita had got clear away before the fight began. Such a struggle could have but one end. When Rupert recovered consciousness, it was to find that all his men were dead. Then, on his refusal to embrace Islamism, his tortures began.

After fourteen hours, he was still living, although they had hacked off his right foot, burnt out his left eye, and scored his cheek with a hot iron. Suddenly, there sounded the thunder of hoofs to the battle cry of "Tama, Tama."

In two minutes all was over. Mea leapt from her horse and threw her arms round Rupert. Twenty of Ibrahim's men were brought before her, with the Sheik himself. "Do unto them," she said, "as they have done to the English lord, only from Ibrahim cut off both hands and both feet before you hang him to the tree."

V.

It was when Rupert began to recover at Mea's stronghold of Tama that the struggle began, for she loved him passionately. He had passed his word, and

would die rather than break it. If he were to violate his honour, his soul would be as scarred and mutilated as his body.

In the fulness of time he was well enough to return to England, and vowed to Mea that if things should so befall that there was nothing to keep him in the West, if he should need to find new faith and hope and love, he would come back to her. And sorrowfully she let him depart.

He landed in England a scarred and maimed wreck, the very day on which Dick Learner proposed to Edith, who provisionally accepted him, for she thought Rupert long since dead. But as she sat in her snug flat, someone knocked at the door, and Rupert came in, a one-eyed, hideous creature, who, thanks to Dick Learner's efforts, had nothing to give her but a tarnished name.

"No, no," she gasped. "It sounds hard, but I must tell you. I can't—I can't be your wife. Rupert, be merciful. You are dead. Remain dead."

And in his awful and withering contempt for the woman he had once loved, Rupert promised to remain dead.

VI.

SEVEN years later, rumours reached the British Government of a white man who ruled beneficently in Tama. They also reached the ears of Lord Devene, who was breaking up fast. He sent for Edith and elicited the truth. "Now," said he, "the best thing you can do is to go and find him. My little son is dead, and Rupert will have the title when I die."

He died shortly after, and Edith, accompanied by Lady Devene and Dick Learner, set out for Tama, where she found Rupert, with Mea by his side, preaching to the people. He was a noble-looking man. And Mea was beautiful. When Edith claimed her husband, he asked for a month in which to decide as to the future. But Mea knew what his decision would be. Dearly as Rupert loved her, he would return to England with Edith.

One of Dick Learner's men was ill with the plague, and he lured Rupert to attend to him. Rupert caught the plague. "Beloved," Mea whispered to him, as he lay dying, "our merciful God has called me—I die also. Wait for me."

He smiled. "I understand. I will wait."

For the first time, their lips met. It was their kiss of farewell and of greeting.

THE ONLY WORLD.

By G. B. BURGIN.

(Hutchinson & Co. 6s.)

I.

ALL the world knew that Lady Mary Knut's coming-of-age ball was likely to prove a distinguished success.

Eliot Tanqueray, one of the earliest guests, was about to enter the Promised Land; but he said to himself that it was for the last time. He carried a bunch of crimson roses in his right hand, and, spying Lady Mary's maid, beckoned the girl aside:

"For your mistress at once," he said: "Tell her I waited for them in town, or I should have been here earlier. I've had a spill."

Lady Mary received Tanqueray with well-bred indifference. She was not accustomed to wait. When she caught sight of his broken arm, her expression changed. "Are you hurt?"

Tanqueray briefly explained.

Five minutes later old Dr. Bilberry was at his elbow.

"Come along, you young lunatic, and have that arm set."

Tanqueray came back and dropped into a chair beside Lady Mary, his blue eyes looking into her dark ones.

"You've been saying for the last three days you've something important to tell me," said Lady Mary.

"It's a bit difficult," hesitated Tanqueray: "You know I've nothing of my own except an allowance from Clontorf. I'm a younger son. We've had a row; the situation's impossible. I've suddenly realised that this life is a sham. I'll have no more of it."

"You are quite right, but what will you do?"

"Emigrate. Give it all up."

She looked into his eyes, took a red rose from her heart, and gave it to him. "Good-bye, and—and again, good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" he said brokenly.

"I can't keep this up as I meant to," Lady Mary said softly. "God be with you till we meet again."

II.

As soon as Tanqueray's arm began to mend, he arranged to go to New York. Meeting a Canadian miner, named Clough, who had "made his pile in petroleum," Tanqueray pointed out to him the various

places of interest as they went along on the top of a 'bus, and they became friends.

A few days later, Tanqueray found himself on the platform at Euston Station. A handsome, dark little man, whom he had seen taking his ticket at the agent's, came up and advised Tanqueray to secure a place in the train before the rush began. Just at the last moment, the porters slipped some trunks into the luggage van and shouted to Mr. Clough and a very pretty girl to make haste.

"My name's Splurge—Malcolm Splurge," said the dark little man. "What's yours?"

Tanqueray told him.

As the train slid into the dock at Liverpool, Splurge good-naturedly took possession of Tanqueray's rug and bag.

"You can't manage those things with a broken arm. Here's a letter you must have dropped. Come along!"

Tanqueray, in the seclusion of the cabin, read the letter, which was from Lady Mary.

"What's the matter?" asked Splurge, returning.

"A friend, without letting me know, has taken a first-class passage for me."

"I'm sorry. I thought I might be a bit helpful to you."

"Bosh!" said Tanqueray emphatically. "You'll share my cabin. The place is as big as a barn."

III.

THE next morning, Mr. Clough came into the saloon.

They shook hands after the manner of old friends. "I caught a glimpse of you at Euston," said Tanqueray. "You seemed in a hurry."

"I was in a hurry. So'd you be if you'd an armful of daughter to get into the cars. Myrtle said the bump I got on my head was her fault, so we had dinner in her state-room."

At the end of the voyage, Mr. Clough became very depressed. "I've had bad news. It's these cold-blooded and cold-winded Marconigrams," he complained.

He showed Tanqueray a scrap of blue paper, on which was just a single line of writing:

Petroleum bust up. So am I.

CYRUS BANSIAW.

IV.

THEY all lunched—at Splurge's expense—together at the Waldorf. After lunch, Tanqueray got up. "If Mr. Clough is going back to Canada, we'll go with him, take up some land, and see how we get on."

Mr. Clough smiled for the first time that day. "Come along. I've got a small farm at Longail."

At Longail, a band and reception committee awaited the return of the supposed millionaire miner. With a strong effort, Myrtle Clough choked back her laughter. "What shall we do, dad?"

"Remember I'm your secretary," said Splurge. "Tanqueray's a visitor from the old country. You must be a millionaire if you keep a secretary."

As the crowd melted away and they drove up to the little homestead, Mr. Clough looked round with an air of temporary relief. "You've got me out of one hole," he said to Splurge; "but I reckon you've put me into half-a-dozen bigger ones."

V.

DAY by day, as Tanqueray roamed about Mr. Clough's little farm, the longing to possess one of his own began to haunt him. One morning he was working with Old Daoust, Mr. Clough's head man, in the field leading to the river, whilst Splurge kept watch over the millionaire of Longail.

"M'sieu, you have mak' true frien' to me. I will help you," said Old Daoust. "Have you one hundred dollaire?"

Tanqueray gave his last hundred dollars to Daoust, who returned some two hours later with a document conveying a small farm to the former.

The next day Tanqueray, with Clough, went to take possession and found that the ground was nothing but a barren waste. "The old fool!" Clough cried. "Wasted your bottom dollar on a place like this, thinking this gneiss was valuable phosphate."

"He's the finest man I know," said Tanqueray. "It would be kinder not to undeceive him."

Clough went slowly away. He knew that Daoust was right and that the apparently worthless farm was full of valuable phosphates, but he wanted to test Tanqueray.

"You not call me one tam t'ief, m'sieu?" asked old Daoust, timidly drawing near. "I t'ink for sure heem phosphates."

Tanqueray drew the quivering old man down beside him. "Smoke, *mon père*.

I may have a bigger home some day. I shall never have one I value more."

The old man took the pipe with trembling hand, and smoked his grief away.

VI.

ALTHOUGH the Duchess of Stringithorne had consented to accompany Lady Mary to Canada in search of Tanqueray, she was in a very bad temper.

Splurge, as he drove up the broad gravel road leading to the Caledonia Springs, where Lady Mary was staying, became aware of the scrutiny of many curious eyes.

"Now, Mr. Splurge, I want an explanation," said Lady Mary. "Recent events have led me to believe that my confidence in you as a detective has been misplaced, and that you have neglected the task of advancing Mr. Tanqueray's fortunes with the money I intrusted to you."

"I think not. There is your money untouched." Splurge related the events of the last few months.

"You have done all you could for Mr. Tanqueray. Why?"

"I like him, and he likes me. I thought my way of helping him better than yours. He could never forgive either of us if he knew that you had employed me to shadow him."

Then Lady Mary understood Splurge's loyalty to Tanqueray, and insisted on going with him to the Clough homestead.

Accompanied by Miss Clough, Lady Mary went in search of Tanqueray and found him sitting outside the door of his little *cabane*.

Tanqueray got up from his log. "You! Mary! You!"

"Yes, Eliot."

"Mary!"

"When an obstinate, proud man runs away from the girl he loves because he is poor, what is the girl to do, Eliot? Oughtn't she to run after him and bring him back again?"

"But I'm just as poor as ever."

"Oh, Eliot, you were right to leave the world, but you were not right to leave me."

There was silence for a moment. "I've done nothing but blunder," Tanqueray admitted. "I can't live without you, and I was coming back to England to tell you so."

"Eliot!"

He held her fast in the hushed silence of the night.

The Soldier's Son.

By FENN MARCH.

The story of a bitter disappointment.

"WHAT time do we start to-morrow, Ethel? I suppose I should hardly have time to run round to the club and settle about that Scotch trip with Mackenzie before we go; he writes that he will look in there on his way to the Temple!"

Mrs. Adair started; the colour faded suddenly from her cheeks, and her hands shook as she poured out her husband's coffee.

"Did you think of going?" she asked, handing him the cup without looking at him. Captain Adair laughed cheerfully.

"My dear girl! What an absurd question! Do you think that a man who hasn't seen his only son since he was a baby is going to wait a day longer than he can help now he's got the chance? Besides, the little chap may have got a prize, and then he will be awfully sick if we are not both there. I remember my first speech day as well as anything; the governor came down with mother and the girls, because I wrote that I had the French prize and my form prize as well. By Jove! I often think that was, after all, the best day of my life, and didn't I just put on frills before the girls! If Norman is in the least like me, he is already gassing about his marvelous parent, as if no one had ever had a V.C. before."

Captain Adair paused while he went to the sideboard for more kidneys and bacon, then added carelessly, unfolding the morning paper as he spoke:

"What on earth made you ask if I were going?"

Mrs. Adair laughed quickly.

"My dear boy, how absurd you are! How could I be expected to know that Norman's speech day would tempt you away from Cup Day at Goodwood?"

Captain Adair smiled rather shamefacedly.

"Well, it does seem curious when you put it that way," he admitted. "But somehow I don't seem to be able to think of anything but the little chap! There was

a man on board the *Kinfauns* who had a kid of ten, and was awfully keen on him, and that set me thinking about Norman. You know, Ethel, people talk a lot about the love of a mother, but they don't seem to think anything of a father's feelings, and yet in their own way I expect they are pretty much the same thing."

Mrs. Adair was silent, and her husband went on, meditatively spreading butter on toast as he talked.

"Of course, I don't mean that a man has the same feeling about a child while it is a mere squalling baby; some men may have, perhaps, but I don't think I felt anything much after the first relief that it wasn't a girl. But lately, especially all the time we were shut up in Ladysmith, and then that night when I thought it was all over with me, I have found myself repeating just the word "Norman," and thinking how good a thing it is to have a son to carry on the family name and keep up the family honour.

"I tell you, Ethel, I can imagine a lot of fellows who have gone the pace a bit after their wives have come home, as you did, for the sake of the kid (and heaps of them do it, though I never cared for that kind of thing); I can imagine how the thought of the son who was to come into the name after them would pull them up sharp every time, till at last they would chuck it altogether!"

He stopped abruptly, following the train of his own thoughts, and his wife sat silent and stiff behind the array of pots and jugs that partially screened her from his view.

Her breakfast stood untasted before her, her face was set and rigid, and beneath the table her hands clasped and wrung themselves together in her effort to control the sobs rising in her throat.

Her husband had spoken in his usual tone, eating and drinking the while after the fashion of the ordinary unemotional Englishman, but she knew him well enough to realise that for him to speak so at all was

proof of how deeply his feelings were centred in his son; and his son was— Ah, that was the question! Could she dare to hope that there was any answer, but the one which was racking her heart, and had made a prematurely old woman of her at thirty-two?

As soon as she could get away from the breakfast table Ethel Adair locked herself into her own room and read once again two letters which she knew almost by heart. They were from the head master of the preparatory school for Winchester, to which Norman had gone a year previously. The first ran as follows:—

The Gables,
Byford, Hants,

April 22nd, 19—.

DEAR MRS. ADAIR,—Before next term begins I feel that it will be only right for me to accede to your request and give you my candid opinion on the subject of your son's progress, although I fear my letter may be a somewhat painful one for you to receive.

Norman has now been with us for two terms, and we have had every opportunity of watching him thoroughly. His form master tells me that, during the four months the boy has been under his tuition, he has shown an inaptitude to learn which can only be assigned to physical causes.

The child is not unamiable, nor does he evince any of the vicious tendencies so often apparent in the mentally deficient—I am using plain language by your own request. He seems at times to be able to retain in his memory some portion of the lessons at which he has been working during the day, but this only in the most disconnected and disorderly manner; so much so that I should be inclined to think the co-ordinating centres of the brain are those which are affected.

I imagine it would be better if you removed him from school, and placed him under the care of a specially trained teacher: he needs more individual attention than it is possible for him to have here, and although I believe he is not unpopular with the other boys, it is bad, in my opinion, that he should be exposed to the ridicule which, even if good-natured, is harmful to a sensitive child.

I am deeply pained to have to give you so unfavourable a report, but I feel most strongly that it is a case for plain speaking.—With every hope that the boy may improve mentally as he grows physically, believe me, dear Mrs. Adair, yours faithfully,

E. J. BRANDON.

The second letter consisted of a few lines dated a week later, to the effect that Mr. Brandon consented, in compliance with Mrs. Adair's earnest request, to Norman's remaining at Byford until his father's return from South Africa in the summer. Mrs. Adair read the letters for the hundredth time, rocking herself to and fro in her chair.

"Coward that I am!" she thought bitterly. "Why did I not tell Arthur at first? It would have been easier then. But no, I could not. First there was that horrid time

when he was at Aden, with scarcely a soul to speak to, and missing me so terribly! How could I tell him, then, that I found Norman at five more like a baby of two years old? And then later, through the war, how could I? And now it is too late, and to-morrow—he will know!"

Her mood changed and she began to talk softly and quickly to herself as she replaced the letters in the drawer of her writing-table.

"After all, perhaps he will not notice anything," she told herself. "Men are not so keen as we are in some things, and Norman is a pretty boy. I am glad I made Dr. Brandon keep him, he will pass muster among the other boys, and I will tell Arthur at lunch that I don't expect him to get a prize, as his health has not been good the last two terms. Oh, he must not know! He shall not! God will help me to keep it from him!"

* * * * *

The fast train from Waterloo was nearing the little Byford station, where it was to stop by signal. Ethel Adair sat upright in her corner of the carriage and looked steadily out at the sides of the chalk cutting through which the train was running. Her husband threw his paper aside, and looked at his watch.

"Due in ten minutes," he said, yawning, "it's a quick run! By the way, did I tell you I saw Lennox in the train at Waterloo? Has he got a boy at Byford?"

"Yes, Norman has spoken of him!"

"Good! I hope they are pals, Lennox is one of the best; we might ask his boy to stay with us on Loch Awe in September, he and Norman could do some fishing; a boy can't begin too young. I think I shall look out for a place with some good salmon fishing if I get half the leave that's due to me, I want Norman to be a good all-round sportsman. I forget if you said he could ride yet?"

"No, not yet! He did have some lessons, but—you see he hasn't been strong."

"Ah, well! I must take him out myself if he is at all nervous; but you ought not to have let him give it up, dear, it's the worst thing to knock off when you funk anything—not that any kid of mine is likely to do that, though! I say, we are slowing down; fancy not knowing one's own boy in a crowd; I don't think you've had him photographed half often enough lately, and we were overdone with pictures of him in white frocks and sashes! Ah, here we are,

and, by Jove, here are the boys, like a swarm of bees ! ”

The train drew up at the platform of the little country station, gay with asters, nasturtiums, and scarlet runner beans, and buzzing with small boys in Eton suits and straw hats. The latter, regardless of the wrath of the one porter Byford could boast, flung themselves at the doors of the carriages before the train had come to a standstill.

“Where is he ? Don’t you see him ? ” Captain Adair asked eagerly.

His wife shook her head. “Not yet,” she said slowly. “Oh, Arthur, my fan, it has fallen just under the seat ; please pick it up ! ”

She had seen her boy instantly, her straining eyes picking him out from the hundred and twenty others ; and she knew in that supreme moment that her secret could be kept no longer. Norman stood rather in the background of the other boys, his hat tilted a little back, his mouth slightly open ; no look of eager anticipation lighted up his face, but rather a vague and vacant interest in a scene in which he had no part.

As his mother’s eye fell upon him he put up his hand and crammed a large piece of something into his mouth. Before Captain Adair could raise his head after groveling for his wife’s fan, a bright, dark-eyed boy jumped on to the step of the carriage.

“How do you do, Mrs. Adair ! ” he said eagerly. “Have you seen my people ? What a jolly day ! ”

“Your father is in a carriage behind, Felix,” Mrs. Adair forced herself to answer with dry lips, and Felix, opening the door and lifting his hat, dashed away in the direction of the guard’s van.

“Who was that ? ” Captain Adair asked, as he gave his wife his hand to get out of the carriage.

“Felix Lennox.”

“Nice little chap ; but where is Norman, can’t you see him yet ? ”

Mrs. Adair made no answer ; her mind was working, but she could not register the thoughts that whirled through it. Before she could collect herself, young Lennox was back again, a little girl of five or six clinging to his hand, his father and mother following.

“Can’t you find your boy, Adair ? ” Major Lennox asked, as the two families blended and walked on together. “Look for young Adair, will you, Felix, his mother doesn’t see him ! ”

“All right, father, there he is ! I’ll fetch him,” Felix answered, and darted away, returning in an instant with his captive.

“Norman, dear, come and speak to your father,” Mrs. Adair said, putting her arm round the little boy’s shoulders ; and with a hurried “Excuse me, Lennox,” Captain Adair moved quickly forward. The eyes of father and son met ; the former paused, his outstretched hand dropping to his side ; the latter assumed an expression of more interest and looked up childishly into the face of the tall man who stood staring silently at him.

“I want to see your V.C.,” he said, sucking in his breath as he turned his sweet in his mouth like a little child, “and, father, did you bring me a gun and some powder ? I want to pay Morrison Major out for calling me the village idiot ! ”

For a moment there was dead silence. Ethel Adair, her arm still round her boy’s shoulders, stood motionless as a statue, her eyes wide and despairing as they rested on her husband’s face.

The Lennoxes had moved on, and the platform was empty where they stood, a piteous little group, the tall soldier, white beneath his tan, his eyes fixed with a kind of horror on the face of his son, whose gaze had wandered again and now followed with momentary interest the movements of the station dog, as it shook its tin box and begged for pennies for the Winchester Hospital.

Suddenly Captain Adair looked straight at his wife, and spoke, so low that only she could catch the hoarse tones :

“An idiot ! And you never told me ! You let me believe— Ethel, I could have forgiven anything but that. Come on ! Let us see this ghastly farce through, and to-morrow I will apply for foreign service again ! To let me believe—” His voice broke, and he strode out of the station without glancing again at the boy. His wife tottered, gripped Norman’s shoulder, and staggered with him to a seat.

“Mother is faint, Norman,” she moaned, “will you stay here with her a little while ? ”

The boy wriggled free of her hand. “I can’t stay, mother,” he said importantly, “I want to go and get my prize ! Mr. Brandon said that as father was coming from Africa he would give me one, and I have got the lower third form prize for good conduct ! Why are you crying, mother ? He said you would be so pleased ! ”

Our Pinafore Pages.

These few pages are set apart especially for the children. Contributions to them are invited from parents and nurses, who best know what the little ones like to read. It may, perhaps, interest my readers to know that a frequent contributor to this feature is a nurse to two small children; she retells stories which have interested her charges.

LULU AND THE FROG.

By J. V. O'CONNOR.

A wonderful story of how a little girl made a captive frog happy.

LULU was sad, which was rather unusual, for she was generally a bright, cheerful girl. You see, Frank had gone to school again, for the holidays were over, and there was no one to play with now—at least, no one as nice as Frank. So it was very natural that she should be rather sad. Lulu's real name was Julia, but baby could never manage to pronounce it rightly; the nearest he could get to it was "Lulu," and so they all at home got into the habit of calling her by that name.

Frank had been round the place, and had said good-bye to all his pets, and made a great fuss about them. He had given ever so many instructions to the gardener and cook and Lulu about them, as to what they should do when he was gone.

He had been particularly anxious about Cæsar. Cæsar was a big frog, who lived in a glass marmalade jar, with a stiff paper cover on it with holes made for air. Frank called this jar an "aquarium"; but that was stupid, for there was only a little bit of rock in it, and moss, and some not very clean water, and besides, how could one frog make an aquarium? So Lulu said. And further, that Cæsar was a nasty, horrid thing that gobbled up poor, harmless flies.

Frank had been much worried as to who would look after Cæsar while he was at school. Lulu had declared she never would do it. So he had thought of releasing the frog from his glassy prison and letting him hop off again to the marshy field near the big pond, where he had been caught.

But now Frankie was gone back to school without having come to any decision about Cæsar's fate, and Lulu, wandering about the

house sadly the same evening, had come across the "aquarium." She gave a little start.

"Oh, good gracious!" she cried in dismay, "Frankie's forgotten all about Cæsar! Whatever shall we do?" And she looked in a distressed manner at the big frog, who was gazing steadily up at the holes in the paper roof.

"Oh, mother!" said Lulu, as she ran into the drawing-room to say good-night, "whatever will poor old Cæsar do now? You see, there's nobody to look after him now Frankie's gone. And so Frankie thought of letting him out again into the fields; but he hadn't made up his mind, you know, and now he's gone, and forgotten all about it."

"We'll see about it to-morrow morning, darling," said mother gently; "but now it is time to go to bed, child."

"You know, nurse," said Lulu, as she went up the staircase, "I do believe he knows Frankie's gone—he looked so lonely. You might bring him up and put him out on the window-sill there, and I'll go and have a look at him in the morning. Perhaps he won't be so lonely if he sees me."

Cæsar and his glass-house were placed on the sill of the nursery window, and nurse comforted Lulu by saying that mother could write and ask Frankie if he hadn't better let the frog be put in the fields again.

Lulu got into bed, still thinking about Cæsar.

Just as she was falling off to sleep she heard a funny noise from the window curtain.

"Whatever is that?" she said, sitting up in bed and listening intently.

"Croak, croak!" came distinctly from the window-sill.

"Well, that is wonderful!" cried Lulu. "I never heard him do that before."

And she got quickly out of bed and ran to the window. The sashes were open a little at the top and bottom. She peeped curiously out at the "aquarium" standing there in the moonlight. Cæsar was evidently very excited, for he was standing on his hind legs on the rock in the middle, and his head was right up against the holes in the paper cover.

"Croak, croak!" he said, very loudly and very sadly.

"Poor old Cæsar!" said Lulu feelingly, and then, by pushing very hard, managed to raise the bottom sash higher, and, taking hold of the glass jar, put it on the nursery table.

"There!" she said, climbing up to have a good look at the frog. "Whatever's the matter, you poor old thing?" For though she never really liked Cæsar, now that Frankie was gone she began to feel quite differently towards him. And then, wasn't he lonely, like herself? "You make such a funny noise!" she continued.

Cæsar squatted down on the rock and, turning slowly round, looked at Lulu.

"So would you," he said indignantly, "if you were always shut up in a stupid marmalade jar, and didn't ever see your brothers and sisters."

Lulu wasn't the least bit surprised when he began to speak.

"Yes, I suppose so, poor fellow," said she.

After a while Cæsar got up on his hind legs again and put his head to the roof of the jar.

"Why do you do that?" asked Lulu.

"Don't you hear them?" said Cæsar, in reply. "I hear them quite plainly. Ah, to be there once again!" He squatted down on the rock, and two big tears appeared in his eyes.

"Don't I hear what?" asked Lulu wonderingly.

Cæsar said nothing—he was still weeping; but at last he shook his head quickly from side to side to make the tears fall off; for, as Lulu said afterwards, he had no handkerchief to wipe them away, but then he was always so wet, it really didn't matter.

"Just you listen," he answered shortly, "and then you'll find out."

Lulu listened intently, and then she heard, faintly but distinctly enough, the sound of numberless "croak, croaks!" out in the distance.

"Oh, it's the frogs out in the big pond," she said. "That's what nurse calls their evening concert."

"Yes," said Cæsar, shaking off another couple of tears; "that's where I lived before your Frankie caught me. Ah! what happy times I had! We used to sing together every night." He ceased speaking; his voice was choked by emotion.

Lulu was greatly touched, but did not say anything in reply, only kept looking at the unhappy frog. Cæsar seemed to get tired of this, and faced round to the open window. The croaking melody in the big pond grew louder, and the cool night breeze brought it in at the window with wonderful distinctness.

Cæsar became quite pensive. He was huddled up in a heap, and the big tears were coming fast. He didn't try to shake them off now, but let them roll down his speckled body on to the moss, and so into the little lake that surrounded his rock.

Lulu looked at him with pity. "I suppose your mother and father and brothers and sisters are out there singing to-night?" she said.

The frog lifted his head. "Of course they are," he said miserably. "That's what's troubling me. Ah! if only I could see them once more!" And the tears continued to flow.

Lulu was quite heartbroken at the sight of his sorrow. "You poor old Cæsar!" she said; "I do wish you could go back again to them. But Frankie would be so angry if I let you go out without asking him first. Yes, it's quite out of the question." And then, after a moment's thought: "And even if I did take the lid off he'd never find his way back to the big pond," she said to herself.

Cæsar raised his head quickly and sat up, and quite a hopeful gleam came into his eyes as the tears ceased to flow.

"Wouldn't I?" he said.

"Well," said Lulu slowly, with a wise expression on her face, as if considering the matter from all points, "well, if you do stay here you won't get anything to eat, and then, of course, you'd die."

Cæsar nodded "Yes."

"And if mother writes to Frankie and asks if you're to be set free, the answer wouldn't come for a long time, for Frankie hates writing letters—and then you'd die just the same."

Another nod from Cæsar;

"And supposing Frankie did write at last

and say we could let you go, and you were already dead, and Frankie wanting you to be free all the time, that would be an awful pity."

Cæsar tried to cock his head on one side as he had seen the canary do; but he couldn't do it because he hadn't any real neck. But he appeared very much impressed by Lulu's reasoning, and said: "Hear, hear!" just like the people did when father made a speech, in the parish schoolroom at election time.

Lulu continued her reflections half to herself, half to the frog.

"So after all," she said, "I think it would be better that you should go now, for your father and mother and brothers and sisters must be very sad, and most likely they think you're dead, for you've been here quite three weeks now. I think *my* father and mother would, and Frankie and baby, if I were lost all that time."

"Hear, hear!" said Cæsar again, quite joyfully, and he stretched out his legs and shook himself.

Then Lulu slowly tore the paper lid off the top, and took the aquarium and put it on the window-sill in the moonlight. The sound of the croaking concert came in louder than ever.

"Good-bye, Cæsar," she said. "Give my love to all at home, and don't get caught any more."

Cæsar gladly climbed on to the edge of the jar and looked over. "It's rather a big jump, but it's nice soft grass on the lawn beneath," he said. "I won't ever forget you, Lulu," he continued, "and if you come down to the big pond some evening you'll have a treat. I'm considered to have rather a fine voice, you know," he said vainly, "though it's out of order lately; but a day or two at home will improve it wonderfully. Give my regards to Frankie, and I hope you won't get into a row over this. Good-bye."

And Cæsar sprang out into the moonlight.

* * * * *

Nurse told Lulu next morning that Frankie had remembered about Cæsar after all, and had told father at the railway station that he was to be set free. So the gardener had taken the aquarium down to the big pond early that morning and given Cæsar his liberty.

Lulu laughed outright. "Why, he was gone already," she said. "I let him out last night because he cried so to see his brothers and sisters."

Nurse smiled, and wouldn't believe her, but Lulu maintains to this day that she had given Cæsar his freedom that summer night when the music of the croaking concert was borne in on the night breeze.

♣ WHEN THE TOYS WAKE UP. ♣

By W. H. G. WYNDHAM MARTYN.

When father and mother are fast asleep,
And there isn't a noise in the house,
Except the sound of wind outside,
Or the squeak of some little grey mouse,
There's a sudden stir in the Baby's room,
And it's lit with a wonderful light.
And wouldn't the nurse be surprised if she
saw
How the Toys all change in the night!

The little brown horse with the broken leg,
Who is sleeping by Baby's side,
Grows well again, and prances round
For the Baby to take a ride.
And the Bow-wow, too, who's lost ears and tail,
He grows a most wonderful coat.
And you never saw such magnificent horns
As you see on Billy the Goat.

And then in a twinkle the Soldierman,
Steps down from his round, wooden stand,
And he and the doll with pretty blue eyes
Start off for the Fairies' Land.
There are other Babies to meet, of course,
And other Gee-gees to ride on;
And though they go fast and jump over high
walls
The Babies don't have to be tied on.

And when they are tired, they ride back to bed;
And the Soldier mounts guard once more;
And the Gee-gee nestles by Baby's side,
And the Bow-wow stands by the door.
And no one knows when the morning comes
What keeps Baby so well and bright.
It's because of the wonderful things he did
When he played with the Toys by night.

A SEASIDE ADVENTURE.

By FRANCES E. BURR.

An exciting story for the bigger children.

LAST summer Sylvia, Guy, Jim, and I went to stay at a little seaside place in Wales; our youngest brother, Norman, was foolish enough to bring home the measles from school, so we were packed off to Wales the next day to stay with an old woman, who had once been our nurse, and who now lived in a pretty cottage in the little seaside village of W—.

W— is a very quaint old village, and the country round is so pretty. From our bedroom window in the cottage we had a lovely view of the sea.

The first morning the boys went out to bathe before breakfast, and when they came in I could see that they had something to tell us, for they both seemed to be full of an important secret, and just as we got to the toast and marmalade stage of the meal, Jim, who was generally spokesman, began.

"I say," he exclaimed suddenly, "while we were bathing just now we saw such a queer chap. He was sitting on the rocks and kept looking about as if he were expecting someone; then presently a woman came up, at any rate she was dressed as a woman, but she looked uncommonly like a man, didn't she, Guy?"

"Yes, rather," answered Guy, who is a great admirer of the opposite sex, and considers himself to be a judge on such matters. "Her hands were enormous, and she had on men's boots, lace-up ones!"

"How did you find that out?" questioned Sylvia, leaning across to look at Jim, with both her elbows on the table. The story promised to be exciting, even mysterious, and Sylvia loves mysteries.

"Wait a minute and I'll tell you," answered Jim, delighted with the interest of his audience, for I, too, was listening eagerly. "She sat down beside him, and they began jabbering in that outlandish Welsh, and then pointed to us, but we did not take much notice of them just then, as we were having an exciting swimming match. Then suddenly we heard a splash, and the man called out: 'Will you give us the lady's boot, sir? She has let it fall in

the water.' We rescued it between us, and it was then we noticed its size; it was tremendous, like a very big man's boot.

"As soon as they had once more got possession of it the couple made off, without even a 'thank you,' and after about another ten minutes in the water we came out; but when we went to dress, our clothes were gone. We hunted everywhere, and then Guy discovered a curiously-shaped stone on one of the rocks; it looked something like a trap-door, so we pulled and pushed at it, and at last managed to move it on one side, and then we saw a queer little hollow underneath like a box, with our clothes neatly folded up in it; all were there except Guy's cap. It was really an awfully clever hiding-place, and no one would notice it unless they were looking for something of the sort. We put the stone back in its place, and then dressed and made off home; but it does look queer, though, doesn't it?"

"Very, indeed!" I answered; while Sylvia's eyes were round with wonder. "We must keep a sharp look-out for these people and try to discover what it all means. Where did you leave your cap, Guy?"

"Oh, I remember I put it on the rocks apart from my other things."

"Then they probably did not see it when they stole your clothes."

"I suppose not, but I expect they've got it now, so it is no use going back to look; all we can do is to watch for them."

All the time we were outdoors we kept our eyes very wide open, and very little else but the mysterious couple was talked of during that day; but it was not until evening that our curiosity was rewarded by a sight of them. Then Guy suddenly called me to the window of our little sitting-room, and I saw the odd pair walking along the road in front of the house.

The woman was indeed of gigantic proportions and walked with a very masculine stride; she was wearing a serge skirt and a bright plaid shawl. The man had a suit of some dark material, blue or brown, and looked much more respectable than his

companion, and we noticed that he was wearing Guy's cap. The boys at first wanted to rush out and take it from him, but, on second thoughts, we decided that it would be better to wait and see what happened.

In a little while we saw the two strange creatures walking down the road in the opposite direction, but this time the man had a large-brimmed straw hat, and Guy's cap was gone.

The next day, when Sylvia and I went out to bathe, Sylvia missed a lace collar and I a rather valuable brooch I had been wearing.

Again that night we saw the couple. They walked to the top of the road, as on the previous evening, and, after a short time, came back again as before.

This same thing happened nearly every night, and we naturally grew very curious as to what it could mean.

One day, as we were crab-hunting on the rocks, we saw the couple go up to the trap-door, which the boys had discovered, and put something in. As soon as they were safely out of the way we went to look, and there found a lady's sunshade with a silver handle, a silver-mounted walking-stick, a gold bracelet, and a silk handkerchief.

"This must be stopped, Kathleen," said Jim solemnly, looking at me.

"Yes," I agreed. "But what can we do?"

"We will follow them to-night and see where they go," he answered; and all at once Jim seemed quite grown-up. I felt it was perfectly natural for him to take the lead, and be at the head of affairs, a position I had formerly occupied myself. Then he continued: "If we discover anything peculiar at the top of the road we must inform the police."

"Capital!" said Guy; while Sylvia inquired anxiously if we might all go.

"Little girls will have to be in bed at that time," said Jim teasingly.

"I'm *not* little; thirteen is quite old!" she retorted angrily.

"Don't quarrel, Sylvia," said Guy, the peacemaker. "I tell you what, Jim—you and Kathleen shall go and explore the other end of the road, and Sylvia and I will act as scouts and warn you if anyone comes."

"Agreed!" cried Jim, and as Sylvia now seemed quite satisfied, we turned our steps towards home, where we did ample justice to the good tea which nurse had provided for us.

We watched from our window until we saw the mysterious individuals return from their nightly expedition, then Jim and I set off, leaving Guy and Sylvia to follow at a short distance behind.

When we reached the top of the road we began to search thoroughly. It was a very quiet little street, though of considerable length, and it eventually ended in a large piece of waste ground or common, covered with bramble bushes and great tufts of grass. This we explored for some time in vain, and we were deciding to return and give up the search for that night at least, when I suddenly tripped over a large, loose stone, near a thick clump of blackberry bushes, and fell somewhat heavily.

"Hullo," said Jim, as he picked me up, "what's this? Hurt yourself?"

"No, thanks," I cried breathlessly; "but look!" and I pointed downwards. The displacement of the stone had revealed an opening and a crooked stone staircase.

"Let's go down," said Jim; and he led the way, while I followed, not without some fear.

When we reached the bottom we found a little underground room like a cave; it was lighted with a queer oil lamp hanging on the wall, while all round were shelves laden with bundles of various shapes and sizes.

Jim peeped into one of the bundles and found it contained umbrellas, while another was filled with handkerchiefs and lace scarves. In the middle of the room stood a rough table, with some writing materials and a thick note-book upon it. This we also examined, and it proved to be an entry of all the stolen goods, with the date inscribed opposite each.

We poked round the place for some time, and presently discovered Sylvia's collar; then we mounted the steps again and found Guy and Sylvia patiently waiting for us, and with them we set off to inform the police.

We found the one policeman the village boasted, after a great search, but we had some difficulty in making him believe our story. However, at last he consented to go with us and see what we had to show him, and we set off together, taking another man with us in case, as our friend the policeman said, there should be rough play.

When No. 96 X arrived at the cave and saw the bundles of stolen goods, he was indeed surprised, and said it must have been going on for some time. He was just looking at the book on the table, when

Guy and Sylvia, who were still scouts, called out to us that the two thieves were coming.

We quickly concealed ourselves behind a heap of stones in one corner, and presently in came the pair. The woman was carrying a lantern and the man had a large basket; this he placed on the table and began to unpack, taking out bracelets, brooches, scarves, slippers, gloves, and other articles of apparel.

At a sign from the policeman, Jim and the other man crept out of their hiding-place and approached the woman, while our friend in blue seized the man from behind. Of course there was a great struggle, and it seemed to me to be very "rough play" indeed, but eventually the two were conquered and, having been securely handcuffed, were led off to the police-station in the next town.

There it was found out that, as we expected, the supposed woman was in reality a man. The two had been going about the

neighbourhood for some time, stealing things from people whilst bathing when on the beach, or in the pretty country lanes about the district.

The woman's practice was to beg for alms, and while she was keeping the attention of the victim (generally some well-dressed lady) the man would come behind and pick the pocket of the unfortunate individual.

We had to show the police the secret hollow in the rocks in which the couple used to hide their things during the day, only removing them at night to the cave, where they packed them in boxes and sent them to some shop in London, making quite a lot of money in this way.

They offered no excuses when questioned in Court, and were finally sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

Though we didn't want Norman to be ill, we were all sorry when he was well enough for us to go home again. We hoped we might have some more adventures.

✱ ✱ ✱ *LITTLE JIM.* ✱ ✱ ✱

BY R. HERBERT.

*Some children small, from London Town
Were going to the sea.
Said Bob: "I'll take my little dog,
He'll love to come with me."*

*That's how the dog, whose name was Jim,
Was taken to the sea,
And there he played upon the sands
As happy as could be.*

*One day they all went picnicking;
Of course, the dog went too,
He could not stay at home alone
No, that would never do.*

*They walked along the railway line,
It was their nearest way;
They reached the place all safe and sound;
It was a glorious day.*

*He'd run back to a station, where
A guard made much of him,
And brought him home without a charge—
Wasn't that nice for Jim?*

*They spread the cloth upon the grass.
And when they'd had their tea,
The clearing up did not take long
For all helped cheerfully.*

*But then an awful thing occurred,
The dog they could not find;
It rained so fast they had to leave
Poor little Jim behind.*

*As they walked back beside the line,
A train came speeding by,
And as it passed the children gave
A sudden joyous cry.*

*For in the brake van with the guard.
They saw their pet again;
He always hated getting wet,
So traveled home by train.*

A STIRRING NEW STORY.

YOU CAN START TO-DAY.

Reaping the Whirlwind.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ By ALFRED LEWIS, A.R.C.A.

THE OPENING OF THE STORY.

DURING the marriage ceremony between Miss Adeliza Fane Capell, niece of a rich East Indian merchant, and the Hon. Kenneth Wilgorton, son of the late Viscount Clapham, a slight disturbance is caused by two foreigners—a man and a woman—but no reason can be assigned for it.

As the bride steps into the carriage outside the church, she evidently catches sight of someone she does not wish to see, for she gives a violent start and sinks back trembling among the cushions. She will give no explanation to her husband as to the cause of her conduct.

On arriving at Mr. Fane Capell's house, the newly-made bride retires to her room. The next thing that is known is that she has disappeared, leaving a note for her husband, which says that she cannot live with him. No one had seen her go, but it transpires later that one of the foreigners who had been at the marriage was watching the house for a long time after the return of the couple. Could he have anything to do with the mystery?

Frederick Whinstone, Wilgorton's best man, starts to make some inquiries. He suddenly comes across the foreign woman, and, wishing to discover her identity, traces her to a house in a street off Oxford Street. Meanwhile, Wilgorton himself, thoroughly distracted, returns to his mother's house.

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Clapham Speaks.

KENNETH WILGORTON pushed past the wondering servant, who opened the door of his mother's house to him, and rushed upstairs. He wished to avoid seeing his mother; for Lady Clapham was not quite the person to sympathise with him in his present state of mind. It will be remembered that she had herself returned home in a state of indignant disgust at the extraordinary sequel to her son's wedding ceremony.

Lady Clapham was a widow, and Kenneth was her second son. The elder son, Viscount Clapham, was on the Continent with his wife and family. They were said to be on the Continent for economical reasons. The same reasons had perhaps prevented them from returning to England for the wedding. Money was not plentiful in the Clapham family. Even the inheritor of the title and estates was anything but wealthy, although the interests of other members of the family had been sacrificed to increase his importance.

The Dowager Lady Clapham had no property in her own right; she was very slenderly dowered indeed; her late husband had lived so far beyond his means as to render strict retrenchment necessary after

his decease; and poverty had soured her temper. She was not one of those people whose tempers are improved by misfortune.

Of course, poverty is a relative term, even as wealth is relative. An income which to some people would seem like the riches of Cræsus means to others abject indigence. The house in which Lady Clapham lived—a tall, narrow building, squeezed in between larger ones—was small, and rather shabbily furnished; but it was in an aristocratic neighbourhood.

She sat down each day to a well-spread table, and was waited upon by trained servants. She did not outwardly appear to deny herself any of those conveniences and even pleasures which she deemed essential to her station in life. She frequently drove in the Park in the season. Her carriage was sufficiently elegant; the horses were good, and the appearance of the coachman all that could be desired. But carriage, horses, and coachman were all hired; and sometimes Lady Clapham had to consider the cost before indulging in them.

It is a trite saying that the poverty of the well-born, educated, and refined is harder to bear than that of those who have no appearances to keep up. It was a constant struggle with Lady Clapham to appear what she was not, and what she could never really

make people believe she was. Her efforts to deceive where deceit was impossible—for everybody whose opinion she cared about knew her position—had embittered her life, and had planted wrinkles in her face before the time.

She would have been much happier if she had been born in a humbler sphere of life; for then she could have practised small household economies, in which her soul might have found satisfaction, but which, however great the necessity, pride forbade her to exercise now.

When she gave a dinner-party, she could not help her mind being worried, and her pleasure marred, by the thought of the waste and extravagance usually attendant on such functions; but she, nevertheless, could not bring herself to give directions to the servants to warm up the cold viands which were left for the following day's dinner. And yet, there were times when she could not pay the tradesmen who supplied the viands; and their quarterly bills were a source of torment to her.

She was a fairly regular attendant at church, and duly, when the liturgy required it, confessed herself a "miserable sinner"; but, nevertheless, she felt that Providence was acting in a very unfair way, and her heart was full of gall and wormwood when she saw in the same church her poulterer and his wife, who were able to drive in their own carriage, while she had either to walk, or pay what she could ill afford for a hired brougham. There was something rotten in the state of a world where such things could be.

Overlooking the fact that the said poulterer had to wait a long time before he got any money from her for goods supplied, if, indeed, he ever got it at all, she felt that her patronage, which she was unable to withdraw, was helping to support him in this unbecoming ostentation, while she herself had to look twice at every sovereign she spent.

She hated all those whom she, with comprehensive arrogance, termed "the lower orders," especially if they were richer, or better educated and informed than herself. Such toleration as she had for those beneath her in the social scale was reserved for the really poor and humble. In this she was, perhaps, not different from many others of her class.

In personal appearance the Dowager Lady Clapham was a faded person. Her hair, which had once been pronounced golden,

was now a yellowish drab; her eyes were light in tint, but of no particular colour; her cheeks, slightly tinged with pink, were puffed out, something like those of a cherub on a tombstone; her lips were thin, and always pressed closely together, and the corners much lowered when she was displeased; and her teeth were good. For these latter her dentist was doubtless responsible.

Of her age nothing need be said; it could be ascertained by those curious about such matters from Debrett, if her appearance and the ages of her children did not quite satisfy them. In figure she was of medium height, neither stout nor thin, and she bore herself with much dignity. She carried her hands, which were particularly long and white, in a peculiar, loose, helpless kind of manner, and she had a habit of closing her eyes when speaking to anyone. Her servants were of opinion that she could see just as well with her eyes closed as open.

She had wished her second son, Kenneth, to enter the Army, as one of the few careers she considered open to a gentleman; and a good deal of precious time and money had been wasted with this idea. He had been through a public school and through college in the way that thousands of young men pass through these institutions. He had not conspicuous ability; he would never make a brilliant scholar; he was not fit for the Church or the Law; and he knew it. He failed twice in the military entrance examination. He had no particular wish to become a soldier.

Then for a time he did nothing, until one day he electrified his mother by informing her that he had decided to take a partnership in a wholesale provision business, the headquarters of which were situated somewhere in the East-end. The opportunity of doing this had come to him; and he was resolved to embark the few hundreds of ready capital he possessed in this speculation.

It was a little before the time when countesses took to keeping milliners' shops; dukes and earls had not yet given their attention to business, other than that connected with the government of the country, with a view to increasing their incomes.

Trade was still considered beneath the notice of a gentleman; and Lady Clapham nearly died with chagrin when she found her son doggedly determined to carry out his idea. The Viscount was appealed to; but that gentleman declared that he did not "care a hang what Ken did," so that they

did not worry him. If he could make money, let him.

In the end the dowager became more reconciled, especially when the "concern" turned out to be a paying one. Her poulterers' and butchers' bills were more regularly discharged now. But she always spoke of her younger son as being very peculiar, accompanying the declaration with the deprecatory gesture of her white hands natural to her.

Kenneth was glad to make things smoother for his mother; and he did not do things by halves. He threw in his lot with the people with whom his business interests were connected; and accepted invitations to the houses of his partners. It was at one of these houses that he met Adeliza Fane Capell. And henceforth life wore a different aspect for him.

She was exceedingly beautiful—"a daughter of the gods, divinely tall, and most divinely fair"—accomplished, charming, and refined, more lovely far than any woman he had ever met before. None of the nobly-born women of his own particular set could compare with her.

Love was a plant of rapid growth with him. He thought of her by day and he dreamt of her by night; and he sought every possible opportunity of meeting her. And yet it was some time before he breathed a word of love.

She could not fail, however, to be aware of his devotion long before he spoke, and at times she seemed to wish to avoid him. This, perhaps, only added fuel to the flame. But he was too diffident, too distrustful of his own merits, too respectful a worshiper at her shrine to hastily declare his love. And when at length he did this in words made eloquent by the depth of his passion, she, with much agitation, declined his suit.

There was something, however, in the manner of the refusal which, despite the shock it gave him, encouraged him to hope and persevere. He could not understand her. Although one of the least conceited of men, he could not help feeling that it was not dislike, or even indifference to him, which caused her refusal; and when some months later he renewed his offer, his faith was rewarded. Her objection to him, if she really ever had any, was evidently removed.

She accepted him; and life for a few months was a rosy dream, marred only by the sharp speeches his mother thought fit to indulge in concerning his engagement.

In reality, Lady Clapham was not displeased about the engagement. She would have preferred a wealthy and nobly-born bride for her son; but Miss Fane Capell was very presentable; she had a decent name—it might have been some horribly plebeian cognomen—and, above all, she was an heiress. After his marriage Kenneth might ere long be able to retire from his business in the City; and he need not have much to do with his wife's relatives. If Adeliza played her cards well, her mercantile origin might be forgotten or overlooked; for wealth does cover a multitude of sins.

These reflections, however, did not prevent Lady Clapham from occasionally throwing out to her son sarcastic and even bitter remarks about tradesmen and tradesmen's daughters. Kenneth was too closely wrapped up in his own happiness, also too accustomed to his mother's peculiarities, to pay much attention to this; and when she consented to attend the wedding, he was delighted. She had only, he felt sure, to know Adeliza well, and her heart would be won by her beauty, her gentleness, her goodness, and her accomplishments.

How rudely was his bright dream shattered! Instead of leading from the altar a blushing and happy bride, she had been pale and shrinking; she had sat by his side in the carriage like a marble statue of despair and, then, she had fled from him—not only plunging him in grief and consternation, but making him an object of ridicule to the world. He was deeply hurt.

He was prepared to make any sacrifice, if necessary, to insure her happiness; and she had acted thus. We repeat, he was extremely sensitive to ridicule; and his position as a forsaken husband—forsaken on his wedding-day—was an absurd one. He fancied that even the servant who opened the door gazed at him with wonder akin to contempt.

He trusted Adeliza too deeply to imagine that it could be anything worse than a silly, girlish whim—utterly incomprehensible certainly—which had caused her flight. She must have had a sudden attack of illness in the church, brought on probably, partly by nervousness, and partly by the startling interruption to the marriage ceremony. What girl, under like circumstances, would not have been upset?

He resolutely put from him all idea of mental aberration. His Adeliza, of whose intellect he was so proud, go mad! It was impossible. She would, of course, soon see

the folly of the step she had taken. They would soon be together again. But his position was none the less awkward for the time. And how find her quickly enough to avoid serious scandal?

It was quite easy to say that a young lady like Adeliza could not disappear all at once in London, and leave no trace; but the fact remained that, unless she came back of her own free will, or unless official help were called in—a thing to be avoided if possible—hours, perhaps days, might pass before she was found.

Then he thought of her despairing note; and he read it again and again. It seemed to intimate that something more serious than a girlish whim had urged her to the step she had taken. And yet he would not believe that any man or woman in the church that morning, or out of it, could have had anything to do with it. What could be the right explanation?

With desperate haste he threw off his wedding clothes—with what different feelings had he put them on!—then life was a vision of bliss; now everything was dark and gloomy. He dressed himself in a dark tweed suit, and hastened downstairs again. At the drawing-room door he was confronted by his mother.

"Kenneth," she said, "has that extraordinary young woman come back? I never—"

"Mother, spare me!" he interrupted. "I am going back to Mr. Capell's now. Perhaps—"

"Oh, I see; she still thinks well to absent herself," Lady Clapham in turn interrupted. "May I ask what you are going to do?"

"Do, mother! Search London—search England, if necessary!"

"You do what you think best, doubtless," she said coldly. "But you do not seem to me to grasp all the dreadful possibilities of the situation. Most girls are peculiar—alas! to my cost I know it; but girls of this class—" She paused, closed her eyes, and folded her white hands before her.

"Mother, what do you mean?" he demanded hotly. "Adeliza is a lady in every way; and you know it. Please be careful what you say. Heaven knows I cannot bear much now!"

"My poor Kenneth, come into my boudoir. We cannot talk here. Nay, you must!"—as he made a gesture of refusal. She took him by the arm, drew him into the room, and closed the door. "My poor Kenneth, you were always a little stupid—excuse

me—and you are acting rather stupidly now. I noticed things in the church, in the vestry, and outside."

"What do you mean? Do you wish to drive me mad? Speak plainly!"

"Men are easily gulled where a pretty face is concerned," remarked Lady Clapham, again closing her eyes, and rubbing one white hand slowly over the other.

"Speak out plainly, if you have anything to say!" he repeated, almost rudely. "I hate innuendo! But, no—I will not listen!"

"Kenneth, don't be violent! It is bad form. For your own sake, you must listen. You cannot imagine," she went on, "that I wish to pick holes in the character of a young—lady, whom I had, at some cost to myself, made up my mind to receive as a daughter. The whole affair is too awful already!"

At the neck of Lady Clapham's dress sparkled a costly diamond brooch, which was a present from the young lady in question. There was a dangerous light in her son's eyes which rather alarmed Lady Clapham.

"I repeat, girls are peculiar," she said, with some hesitation; "but no girl in her senses would run away, without very good cause indeed, immediately after the wedding ceremony, from any man for whom she cared; but especially from a husband who was raising her in the social scale as you were raising this lady."

"Mother!"

"Please don't interrupt!" The white hands waved before him again.

"Then, speak quickly. Say all the bitter things you have to say at once. I will know your meaning!"

"Kenneth, you forget yourself. I will speak for your sake; and I hope I need not tell you that mine is an unpleasant task. There were some people in the church who, you remember, caused a slight disturbance. I saw these people—a young man and an old woman, evidently foreigners, and belonging, I should think, to what is called, I believe, the shabby-genteel class, whatever that may mean. The archdeacon felt compelled to pause for a few seconds, and everybody was more or less startled. It seemed to me that your bride was something more than startled."

"And what then?" he demanded fiercely. She looked at him, raised her hands, and let them fall again.

"What then?"

"My dear boy, how should I know?"

"You mean something. Speak!"

"Miss Fane Capell was at school in France for some years. These people were foreigners and were evidently most unduly interested in the wedding. Adeliza's manner entirely changed from the moment of that strange interruption. From all that a happy bride might be, she became a pale, terror-stricken thing. She nearly fainted when she saw the man and woman amongst the crowd in the street. And then——"

"You are wrong! You are wrong!" he burst out, although there was a great sinking at his heart as he spoke.

"I hope I am; but I think not. If you find she has returned to her uncle, that she can explain her conduct to your satisfaction, and that scandal can be avoided, no one will be more pleased than I."

"Then why suggest horrors too dreadful to mention?"

"Kenneth, I have no wish to suggest anything. I simply state facts, because I would have you be upon your guard. In any case, the position is a frightful one: Think of the newspapers to-morrow."

Without another word, he turned and left her, the hot blood rushing like liquid fire through his veins. His mother called to him to stay; but he paid no heed to her. Her manner had suggested even more than her words; and he would know the truth: He would find this man—this foreigner—he would wring the truth from him; and if—if what? He did not then pause to ask himself the question.

His brain was in a whirl. He was mad with jealousy. Ordinarily, he was a healthy, undemonstrative young Englishman—not at all melodramatic; indeed, with a supreme contempt for what are called heroics in common life; but his mother's tone and words had kindled a fire within him, or perhaps had simply applied a match to the fuel already there. For a time his implicit trust in Adeliza had gone. A passion was aroused in him of which he had before seemed incapable.

He rushed downstairs, and went to a small room, which was called his study, on the ground floor. A minute or two afterwards there was a tap at the door, and he hastily concealed something under his coat, as a young girl, clad in white and with a face as pale as the dress she wore, entered the room.

She laid a thin, almost transparent hand, on his arm, and said in a voice of strange

sweetness, which few who heard it ever forgot:

"Kenneth, it is your wedding day!"

His face softened; but he removed her hand from his arm, and walked towards the door.

"Kenneth, it is your wedding day!"

"Geraldine, go back to your room," he said, with forced gentleness. "I cannot stay with you now."

"Kenneth, do stay a moment. You must stay a moment. Why are you here, looking so strange? Oh, you terrify me! And I have had such frightful visions—fearful sights. I thought a wedding day should be a happy day—that the joy bells should ring—that there should be music and flowers, and mirth and smiles. But this seems full of horror. There is something dreadful in your face. Mamma is cold and silent. She will not tell me what has happened. What is it? Oh, what is it? Where is Adeliza?"

She clung to him in such a way that he could not release himself without using what would have seemed cruel force to one so fair, so slight, so frail. He put his arm round her waist, and drew her to a couch.

She was his sister, a few years younger than himself. Of all the thorns which rankled in the flesh of Lady Clapham, her daughter Geraldine was the worst. Geraldine had always been a strange child, half-witted, people said; and her mother tried to explain the fact by the story of a dreadful fright the girl had received when very young.

It was a matter of intense wonder to her ladyship, and, indeed, to many other people, how she could ever have had such a child, unless the alleged fright really accounted for her peculiarities. Her worst enemy or best friend could scarcely have accused Lady Clapham of much imagination. Her daughter seemed of "imagination all compact," disordered though it might be.

Lady Clapham never fainted in her life: Geraldine not only fainted, but was even subject to long trances, during which she lay without apparent sense or motion; and when she recovered, would sometimes relate sights and sounds she had seen and heard in this comatose state, enough to freeze one's blood, her mother said.

Eminent doctors had been consulted; but they could do nothing for her: Time might work a change in her condition, they said; but that was all the comfort they

could give. It was obviously impossible to take such a girl into society; and Geraldine was kept very much in the background. She had, of course, been told of her brother's wedding; but it had not been thought wise to take her to the church.

She would have been beautiful but for her painful thinness and excessive pallor. Her features were well formed; her eyes were large, dark, and when she was excited of great brilliancy; and her long, dark hair was rich and abundant.

A strong affection existed between the brother and sister, although their natures were so very dissimilar; he strong, healthy, matter-of-fact; she frail, dreamy, and imaginative, even to uncanniness.

He placed her on the couch, and drew his arm from her waist.

"I cannot stay with you, Geraldine," he said.

"But, Kenneth, where is Adeliza? Why has she gone alone? Why are you not together?" she asked.

"What has mother told you?" he demanded, almost angrily.

"Mamma has told me nothing; but I can read things in your faces; and I have seen things. Adeliza has gone, gone! And—oh, Kenneth! there is blood!—blood between you! Oh, my brother! my brother!"

And, with a half-stifled shriek, she flung her arms round his neck, and hid her face on his shoulder.

* * *

CHAPTER V:

The Two Foreigners.

ALL sounds ceased in the room when Whinstone knocked at the door.

He repeated the knock, and then a woman's voice called out from the interior of the apartment:

"*Que souhaitez vous? Que voulez vous?*"

Whinstone wished to see the door open before he spoke, and, therefore, remained silent:

"Is there anyone? What want you?" cried the same voice in English, but with a strong foreign accent.

Instead of replying, he knocked again; and then he heard an exclamation of impatience in French, and the door was opened a few inches by the woman he had seen in the street:

"Who are you?" she asked, peering out on to the dark landing:

"Pardon me, madame; I wish to make an inquiry."

"But how should I answer inquiries? Go to the people down the stairs. They are the proper people for you. I am a stranger. I know nothing."

He wanted to get a glimpse of the inside of the room; but she still kept the door half-closed, and her body filled up the aperture:

"Madame, it is of you I wish to make the inquiries."

"But who are you? I do not know you: I cannot see. Ah—I think you are the gentleman who helped me in the street when the pigs of people laughed. Oh, the English! they are—— But why come you here? I can do nothing for you. How should I?"

The light of the lamp inside fell upon his face more than upon hers; but she did not remove her hand from the door, or open it wider. Her extreme caution increased Whinstone's desire to see the interior of the apartment. Was it possible that his friend's wife was there?

"It will take some little time, madame, to explain my business," he said.

"Then come one other day. *Demain*, monsieur—to-morrow, if you please."

She was evidently determined not to invite him to enter, and there was nothing for it but to state his business, or to go away without any result whatever. It was not an easy matter to state his business. He resolved, however, to speak out, and as abruptly as he could, watching her face as well as the dim light would allow while he spoke.

"A young lady—the young lady you saw married this morning at the church of St. Clement—has disappeared—gone from her home. We are seeking her."

"Ah! How can I help that? And what know I of your young lady?"

"You were in the church. You know her: You were excited—the marriage excited you—you called out something during the service."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* these English! Why not should I call out when I was *malade*—ill? Tell me that?"

"Excuse me, madame; you and your companion followed the bridal party home: You remained outside the house until——"

"Oh, what is all this? Go away! Go away! I will call the police! All this is but pretence. You look like a gentleman; but you may be *un voleur*—a robber. How know I? Go away, if you please!"

Her voice rose almost to a shriek. A door was opened below, and a footstep was heard upon the stairs.

"What is the matter, madam?" cried a sharp voice. "Emma, light the gas. It is as dark as Egypt, you stupid thing!"

"You told me, mem, not to——"

"Never mind what I told you. Light up. Yes, madam; what is it?"

A corpulent woman, with frizzy black hair, and adorned with a profusion of jewellery, appeared, her ornaments sparkling in the light of the gas which the servant had just ignited on the landing.

"Now, madam, if you please."

"There is a man here. He is a stranger to me. You have a front door; it can be what you call fastened. You have a servant. She let a man come up to my room without announcement; and I know him not. She is stupid—a stupid pig!"

"I knew nothing of this," said the landlady. "What may you please to want, sir?" she demanded, turning to Whinstone.

"Your servant admitted me. I came upstairs unannounced, it is true; but that was not altogether my fault. I came to make an inquiry from madame."

"I know you not. I know few Englishmen. How know I not that you are not *un voleur*?"

The Frenchwoman turned as she spoke, entered the room, and slammed the door.

"It seems to me, sir, that the best thing you can do is to get out of this as soon as you can," said the landlady rudely.

"Madam, I am a gentleman. I have no designs upon your property, or that of Madame Lenoir. I will give you my card, if you like."

"Oh, I daresay! Excuse me; how do I know it is yours, if you give it?" asked the woman contemptuously. "I must say it looks queer to be prowling about on a dark landing. You have dropped your handkerchief," she added, pointing to a piece of cambric which lay at his feet. "But, no; it is a lady's, isn't it?"

There seemed no particular reason why he should conceal his name, and he had taken out his card-case. Now he stooped to pick up the handkerchief. It was certainly too small for his, and he was about to say so, when a sudden thought struck him. He examined the corners, and saw the initials A. F. C.—the initials of Mrs. Wilgorton's maiden name—elaborately worked on the handkerchief. He thrust it in his pocket.

"My business is of importance," he said gravely. "Would you mind answering a few questions concerning Monsieur and Madame Lenoir?"

"That handkerchief is yours, is it? I shouldn't have thought it. As to answering questions, if you want any information about my lodgers, you must get it out of them. If they are straight with me, I don't interfere with their business. Whether madam knows you or not, she evidently don't want to have anything to do with you. Is there anything wrong? Are you a detective?" she added suddenly. "To be sure, in these days of dynamite and things, one has to be careful about foreigners. Come downstairs."

She had sunk her voice to a whisper. He followed her to a lower floor.

"How long have these people been here?" he asked.

"They only came yesterday."

"A mother and son?"

"Yes; they say so. But what have they done?"

"Have they any visitors? Has a young lady been here to-day?"

"Are you a detective?"

"Please answer my questions first."

"I don't quite see why I should, until I know who you are. And the fact is, I have been out nearly all day; and I don't know who has been," said the landlady, evidently impressed by his manner, and half-frightened.

"Kindly ask your servant. All this is important. If you give what assistance you can, it may save you a considerable amount of trouble hereafter."

"Emma, Emma, come here!"

The domestic, who had been lingering in the background, approached.

"Emma, has anyone—a young lady—been in to-day to see Monsieur and Madame Lenoir?"

"Well, you see, mem, they was out a good deal, and they has their latch-keys, and I'm busy downstairs; no time for nothin'—so I don't rightly know who they brings in, and who they takes out. I did 'ear 'em talkin' pretty loud a hour or so ago, when I was upstairs; and there seemed another voice as wasn't theirs."

"Did you hear what they were talking about?"

"Oh, no, mem. It seemed like French gibberish to me."

"Was the third voice that of a lady—a young lady?"

"Lor, sir, it might hev been for anythin' I can tell; but jest then the butcher, he came, and I had to go down. And, so, what with 'im and the milk, and one thing and another, I were kept down, and didn't 'ear no more."

"It's just the way with them girls—always with the men. You can't keep 'em from it. If your back is turned a moment, they're off. Go, go, you bold thing! I know you! It was a good long gossip with the butcher and the milkman, instead of doing the work you're paid for. You see, you can't say much to them," she went on, as the servant drew back. "They're that plaguey independent, all along of school boards and nonsense, as ratepayers have to find the money for."

"Pardon me; I should like to ask the girl a few more questions."

"If you would let me know who you are, and what you are driving at," objected the woman.

However, Emma, who appeared to be lingering on the kitchen stairs, was bidden to approach again.

"Are you quite sure that the young lady who called to-day is not upstairs now?" Whinstone asked.

"What with hevin' latch-keys, and one thing and another, 'ow should I know, sir?"

"Answer me, please. Do you know whether the lady is there or not?"

"Well, no, sir, I don't; so there!"

"And you didn't understand what was said when you listened?" said the landlady.

"I listen! I'd scorn the haction! What do you mean by goin' on at a poor girl like this? I'll give notice to-morrow, I will."

She put her much-begrimed apron to her eyes and walked towards the kitchen again.

"You see what you are doing, sending my servant out of the house, and me left to do as I can!" cried the landlady. "What are these people? And who are you? What have they done? I have a right to know. Are you all a pack of French anarchists going to blow up the street with dynamite?—and shall we find ourselves in little bits, and dust and ashes, to-morrow morning? An Englishwoman's house is her castle, as well as a man's; and I won't have folks prying here, unless they speak out, and say what they're after—no; not if I'm clapped in Holloway Gaol for it this blessed minute!"

"I must know whether the young lady is in the house or not before I leave it."

"Let monsieur come up the stairs again!" cried a shrill voice from the upper floor: "Let him come up again, if he will! Let him look under the bed—anywhere—to see if his young lady—your young lady, ah!—is there. What do honest people want with his young lady? Bah! he is a fool! And what are you, Madame Bagges, to permit your good lodgers to be insulted? Bah! the English are all mad! mad! mad! They think of nothing but dynamite, and into fits they fright themselves. *Qu'il y a des sots dans le monde!*"

And Madame Lenoir laughed shrilly and mockingly.

"Madame," said Whinstone earnestly, yet not without some embarrassment, "a young lady——"

"Young lady again! Oh, *Mon Dieu!*"

"Left her home mysteriously to-day. She has been to this house." He began to mount the stairs again as he spoke.

"How know you that? What mean you? What have I to do with it?"

"This handkerchief is hers. I found it close to your room door. Her initials are on it."

He had taken the handkerchief from his pocket. Madame Lenoir snatched it out of his hand.

"A. F. C.," she read—"Antoinette, Françoise Carnot, my niece. *Merci!* But I would advise you, monsieur, not to pick up ladies' handkerchiefs in strange houses. My niece has a lover, and it would not well have been for him to find the handkerchief on you. Your great Shakespeare has a tragedy about a handkerchief. The French, as the Moors, are sometimes jealous; and when so they strike. *Regardez bien!* You may have more dynamite, or something, if you take not care, than you like!"

"Madame, this is nonsense! I——"

"Nonsense, is it? *Voilà! ma chambre!*"—pointing to the open door of her room: "Look! Look under the table, in the stove; look everywhere for your young lady!"

Whinstone gave a rapid glance round.

"Satisfied, are you? Permit me to ask, are you the husband of the lady who has run away?"

"No, madame; I am not."

"Her brother?"

"No."

"Not her father, I take it. Perhaps her lover. Ah! ah! so! Take the advice of

an old woman. Go home, and let her husband, or her father, or her brother search for her. It is not well to put your nose into everything, concern it you or not. Oh, *Mon Dieu!* how strange people are!"

It was no use to linger. He was followed downstairs by madame's mocking laughter.

"I would thank you to know what you are about another time, before you come poking into a lady's house. It would serve you right to call the police!" said Mrs. Bagges; and the servant, scarcely allowing him to get outside, banged the door after him.

Was the shrill-tongued old Frenchwoman right? Had he acted like a fool? His sympathy for his friend had led him on; but perhaps, after all, the conclusions he had drawn from the incident in the church, and the statement of Mrs. Bopple and the page boy, were wrong. These French people might not have anything to do with Adeliza's flight.

As to the handkerchief he had picked up, whether he attached any credence to Madame Lenoir's explanation or not, he could not prove that she was wrong. She had mocked him; but that did not prove conclusively that she had attempted to deceive him.

At any rate, he had come out of the adventure with very little credit to himself. Perhaps Mrs. Wilgorton had already returned to her uncle's house, or something might have been heard of her. Her letter, despairing and wretched, to her husband did not indicate a speedy return; but then, as he had heard, there was certainly no understanding some women.

She might possibly, unknown to her friends, suffer from some species of hysteria, which rendered her for a time irresponsible for her actions. How different altogether she must be from one whose name rose to his lips, at the thought of whom his face brightened—one whose every action was guided by true womanly kindness, tact, taste, and judgment!

Had he been acting in too officious a manner? Unless the mental balance of his friend's bride were in some way disturbed, it was not altogether pleasant for him to be following her up, and spying, as it were, upon her actions. She had gone away of her own free will. She had not been carried off by some jealous rival, like the heroine of a certain class of novels. She had herself walked deliberately out of her

uncle's house, and purposely concealed her destination from her friends.

If he had found her in the house from which he had just been ignominiously expelled, she would probably not have thanked him for his interference. He had all the average young Englishman's hatred of being thought meddlesome, and of making himself ridiculous. But then, poor Wilgorton! He must do all he could to help him. He would go back to Mr. Capell's house to ascertain whether any news had been received there.

His wishes at that moment would have led him in a different direction; but his promise to his friend, and a mental vision of Kenneth's pale, haggard face decided him.

A dinner-party had been arranged for that evening at the merchant's house, and hasty notes had been sent to the invited guests, postponing the function. One or two guests, however, who had not received their notes, had arrived; and had to go away again.

Mrs. Capell sat alone, almost frantic with vexation, and, to do her justice, with anxiety. No, Adeliza had not returned, and nothing had been heard of her. Mr. Capell had been in to take a glass of wine and a mouthful of food; and had gone out again. He had been to the houses of every friend his niece had in London.

Wilgorton had been in several times, like a wandering ghost. He also had been to every likely and unlikely place he could think of. The girl must, undoubtedly, have gone suddenly mad. What else could explain her conduct? All this came of looking after other people's children. She, Mrs. Capell, had none of her own, thank Heaven! and yet, see the trouble she was landed in!

"And to have to explain to people—people who expected a good dinner—it is too awful!" said she.

While they were talking, Whinstone and Wilgorton both returned, the former tired, anxious, and vexed; the latter wild-eyed, and more pale and haggard than ever. Whinstone purposely abstained from saying before his friend where he had been. He thought it would do no good.

"We can't do more to-night," said Mr. Capell, throwing himself into an easy-chair. "I don't believe she is in any real danger, you know. Adeliza is not that sort. I keep telling Wilgorton so. But did anybody ever hear of such a thing? It is, of

course, amazing; but, no doubt, we shall have a letter in the morning, explaining—or trying to—this extraordinary conduct. A glass of wine, my dear. Wilgorton, my dear sir, do take a glass of wine—now do! You can't go on like this! Mr. Whinstone, a glass of wine?"

"When Adeliza was at school in Paris, Mrs. Capell," said Wilgorton, speaking in a strange, hoarse voice, "what friends did she make? Whom did she know? Mr. Capell does not seem able to tell me."

"I have assured Mr. Wilgorton that, with our consent, she made no friends except the girls in the school," said Mr. Capell; "daughters of most unexceptionable people. Madame Lenoir was very particular, or we should never have allowed my niece to go. The establishment was highly recommended."

"Madame Lenoir!" exclaimed Whinstone.

"Yes; Madame Lenoir. Do you know her?" said Mrs. Capell.

All eyes were turned inquiringly upon him. There was something in his tone which attracted their attention. He hesitated.

"For Heaven's sake, Whinstone, speak!" cried Wilgorton vehemently. "I know that the people who behaved so strangely in the church were foreigners. You have heard something. Speak! I will know!"

"My dear fellow, I know nothing that will help. I wish to Heaven I did!" said Whinstone; and he gave a guarded account of his interview with Madame Lenoir. He was sorry afterwards that he had allowed himself to be prevailed upon to do so.

"You went there," said Wilgorton, "because——" He broke off; then demanded abruptly: "Where did you say the house was?"

"No information can be got there," said Whinstone.

"No. But where is the house?"

Whinstone gave the address; and without another word Wilgorton turned and left the room. A moment later his friends heard the front door close.

"That young man will do himself, or somebody else, a mischief," remarked Mr. Capell. "If I am not mistaken, he has a pistol with him. I saw it in his coat pocket."

"Somebody ought to go after him," said Mrs. Capell.

"I will go after him," said Whinstone.

"Do you know where he has gone?"

"No; but I might overtake him."

"How will you know the way he has turned, unless he has gone to the address you gave him? It is my opinion he has: The idea of Madame Lenoir being here! And—— Good Heavens! if it was she who was in the church she had a man with her."

"My dear, what do you mean? Madame Lenoir is a scholastic person——" began Mr. Capell.

But Whinstone waited to hear no more: With a hasty apology he hurried away: Outside he paused a moment; then directed his steps towards the house where he had had the interview with Madame Lenoir.

The night was dark and chilly. The wind had risen, and blew in great gusts round the street corners. He pulled up his coat collar round his neck, and, with an ever-increasing dread of he knew not what, hastened on, keeping a sharp look-out for Wilgorton. But he saw nothing of him.

The house was in Bloomsbury, and the long, dreary street seemed now almost deserted. A light still burnt in the upper room belonging to the Frenchwoman. He walked about for some time on the opposite side of the road, watching the house, until wearied of what seemed a purposeless promenade. Then he determined, whatever came of it, to ring at the door again.

After pulling the bell two or three times, the servant maid appeared—the same woman he had seen before. As soon as she saw who he was she cried:

"Well, I'm blessed!"

He slipped a half-crown into her hand: He was so little of the conventional diplomatist of fiction that on his former visit he had forgotten this little and perhaps necessary precaution.

"I want a few words with you. Has a gentleman been here?"

Before the girl could reply, Mrs. Bagges, the landlady, came upon the scene.

"Well, of all the impudence, this beats everything I ever heard of! Cock fighting's nothing to it! You here again! And trying to bribe my servant. I saw you do it. We know nothing of no gentleman, nor of no young lady. And if you want to know anything more of my business, you must call upon me in a proper way. Come in—Emma!"

She seized the girl's arm, and dragged her in. She then banged the door in Whinstone's face.

CHAPTER VI.

Arrested for Murder.

COLONEL and Mrs. Brunell were serious people—undoubtedly sincere, but narrow. They were a little too ready to notice the difference between their own way of life and that of their more worldly neighbours, and this induced a sort of self-gratulation, a perhaps partly unconscious feeling of spiritual superiority.

As regarded himself and the other members of the rigid sect to which he belonged, the Colonel's real, if unspoken, sentiments might be very well expressed by the words of the old hymn, which declares :

We are a garden walled around,
A sacred and peculiar ground.

It was said that in his youth he had been as wild as most young men ; but, since his retirement from the Army some years before, he had become very staid and very pious, very much given to bemoaning the sins of the world, to tract distributing, and even to preaching.

Colonel Brunell, as has been intimated, was a Dissenter. It is a curious fact that military men, when they do repent of the error of their ways, and become religious, are almost always very Low Churchmen indeed or Dissenters.

It matters not to what particular branch of Nonconformity the Colonel belonged. Suffice it to say it was one which was Calvinistic in doctrine and rigid in practice, yet which allowed him free scope for his preaching abilities. Those churches in which only the ministrations of ordained clergy are permitted are not attractive to men of Colonel Brunell's stamp.

He was foremost at prayer meetings, and also frequently occupied the pulpit at the mission room of the chapel he attended. Sometimes he officiated at the chapel itself ; and was said to preach with much fervour. He rather affected the style and title of "Reverend," though where and how he obtained the prefix nobody knew. The somewhat curious mixture of titles, ecclesiastical and military, "Reverend Colonel Brunell," was not displeasing to him.

Colonel Brunell was tall and thin. He had at one time been good-looking ; but his features had now too severe a cast to be pleasing, although about his face there were signs of weakness which were quickly perceptible to a close observer. In his dress

there was a mixture of the civil and military, as curious and incomprehensible in a man of his habits as his mixture of titles.

He wore a white necktie and coat of clerical cut, and out-of-doors a soft, broad-brimmed hat, often in conjunction with a sort of military cloak fastened by a metal clasp. There was nothing warlike in his appearance. He was said to have seen service ; but it was a marvel to most people how he could ever have given the word of command to a regiment of soldiers.

Mrs. Brunell was also tall, and was still a very handsome woman, although now, like her husband, well stricken in years. In religious views she was not quite so rigid as he. At the bottom of her heart she sometimes felt, if not ashamed, at least a little reluctance to acknowledge that she was a member of a dissenting body.

They had a numerous family—fifteen children, of whom ten were sons, in all. Large families are another peculiarity of retired military men, and especially perhaps of religious ones.

It has often been remarked that children brought up in a strictly religious household frequently throw off the restraints of home as quickly as possible, and are remarkable in after-life for anything rather than religious fervour. "'Tis true and pity 'tis 'tis true." Some people go so far as to assert that a rigidly pious household breeds either hypocrites or profligates. If so, this must depend, in some measure, upon what is meant by "a rigidly pious household."

If the religion is of a gloomy kind, and is used as a means of repressing all innocent enjoyment, instead of rendering, as it surely ought, a home bright, cheerful, and happy ; when the parents are more occupied with the spiritual concerns of outsiders, with the condition of the heathen abroad, than in promoting the happiness and well-being of their children at home—such is likely to be the case.

With, almost as long as the eldest could remember, a most rigid example before them, there was not one of Colonel Brunell's sons who did not cause his parents anxiety in one way or another.

The eldest was a curate in the Established Church, and although, or perhaps because, he had heard nearly all his life pious tirades against the Scarlet Woman, her priests and their imitators, he was a very High Church curate indeed—an extremist among the extreme ritualistic

party—foremost in the very practices, the use of incense, the confessional, lights, etc., his father was, always preaching against.

Of the other nine sons, one was said to be leading a wild, adventurous life in South Africa, two were supposed to be somewhere in the Australian Bush—they had not been heard of for years—two were in the Army, and were making constant demands on their father's purse to supply their extravagance; one was married to a wealthy wife, and belonged to a very fast set; while the remaining three sons were at home doing nothing in particular, except getting into scrapes.

Of the daughters, one had eloped with and been married to a fashionable ne'er-do-well, and, although still young, was a faded, unhappy creature. Two were comfortably settled in life with husbands more or less approved of by their parents; and two were unmarried.

Gertrude—the elder of the unmarried daughters—was a lovely girl about twenty-one years old, the light of the house, the stay and comfort of her parents, the confidant and mistress of her brothers. The younger, the baby of the family, was only about sixteen; but a young person who esteemed herself of considerable importance.

Colonel Brunell had "married money." His own personal income was very small. The house the Brunells lived in was spacious and handsome. A rather strict economy was practised in domestic matters, partly owing to the demands made upon the parental purse mentioned above, and partly from an economical turn of mind in the Colonel himself.

It was a bright, sunshiny morning. Three persons were seated in the breakfast-room of the Colonel's house—Gertrude, our friend Whinstone, Frederick Whinstone—and Miss Brunell's youngest sister.

The latter was decidedly *de trop*, and she had a shrewd suspicion that such was the case; but, nevertheless, showed no inclination to go away. She was a much-indulged and very inquisitive young lady, always anxious to hear everything everybody who went to the house said. She was not quite conscious that her conduct was in bad taste; but the idea that Whinstone might have something of importance to communicate to her sister only made her more determined to remain.

Frederick Whinstone was the suitor of Gertrude Brunell, although not very cordially acknowledged as such by her parents. His position was fairly good,

his connections socially unexceptionable; but he was not so well endowed with worldly goods as could be desired; and in the Colonel's eyes he was a worldling.

The conversation was of a very desultory character, and Whinstone glanced meaningfully from time to time at Gertrude, and then at her sister. He wished the latter pertinacious young person anywhere rather than where she was.

"Gertrude, won't you come into the square for a little while?" he said at length. "It is a beautiful day."

"Yes, do, Gerty; and I will come, too," added the pertinacious one.

"Oh, no, Agatha—you had better not come," said Gertrude: "You know Herr Otmar will be here soon to give you your music lesson."

"No; he won't be here yet; and Benson can fetch me when he does come."

"Agatha, you had better remain here."

"Yes; I know you want to talk secrets. I know you do."

"Agatha!"

Gertrude left the room, followed by her sister. Presently she returned alone, and ready for walking.

"It is all right now," she said.

They went out into the square, in the centre of which was a garden, where the trees were "greening," and the bright Spring flowers were opening their petals. There were a few seats in the garden, and in the centre a broken-nosed, and moss-grown statue of some departed worthy. There was no one there, except a nursemaid and two small children. The nursemaid was deep in the mysteries of a penny novelette; the children were playing.

Gertrude and Whinstone walked backwards and forwards, talking earnestly. They had their own matters to discuss, their own sweet nothings to say; but now they were talking about the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Wilgorton's new-made wife, of the consternation which prevailed amongst all her friends, and of Whinstone's own efforts to find her. Gertrude had been prevented by circumstances from witnessing the marriage at St. Clement's. She had intended being present as an ordinary spectator, not as a guest. She did not know Adeliza personally as yet. They were to become acquainted later.

Gertrude was naturally much interested and astonished. What could be the meaning of it? she asked, as others asked. She

glanced at the handsome lover by her side, and marveled in her heart how any woman could run away from the husband of her choice on their wedding day.

"And have you heard nothing about Mr. Wilgorton since?" she asked.

"No; I told you I waited in the street some time. I did not quite trust the people at the house, and I also thought, if not there then, he might go later. I went round to Lady Clapham's house afterwards, as I did not see him, and to Mr. Capell's again; but he was at neither. I am very uneasy. It is a strange affair."

"It is indeed. I do hope nothing has happened to him."

"I think he is too level-headed to do anything desperate, although it is enough to make him; and he looked pretty bad the other evening. You see, an affair like this makes a fellow look very ridiculous—although, of course, that is the least part of it—to say nothing of anything else. What can have possessed her? Poor Ken! I am afraid it is a bad business."

"Frederick, did she really care for him?"

"She seemed to care for him; and there was no force put upon her inclinations. Why did she consent to marry him?"

"Oh, it is very strange! And nothing more has been heard of her?"

"No, nothing, unless Wilgorton himself has heard something, and gone after her. I don't know what to think."

"Oh, Fred, she could not have really cared for him; unless, indeed——"

"Unless what, dear?"

"Unless those foreign people you told me of could in some way have obtained some wonderful influence over her, which compelled her to act as she did."

Gertrude had read few sensational romances; but she had heard of strange powers obtained, and used for evil, by stronger wills over weaker ones.

They talked thus for some time; but gradually their conversation drifted away from this subject to some of the pretty nothings of which lovers' talk is so largely composed, and which, while so interesting to them, is so very uninteresting to others. They continued to pace the garden paths; the sun shone, the sparrows twittered in the trees; the nursemaid finished her novelette, and awoke to the fact that her charges were covering themselves with dirt, to the necessity of scolding them, and to other awkward realities of life; the clock of a neighbouring church struck the hour:

"I had no idea it was so late!" said Gertrude, starting. "I must go in."

As they issued from the garden into the road, a newsboy rushed past, crying out at the top of his voice:

"'Orrible murder! 'Orrible murder in a railway carriage! Full particulars! Paper!"

Gertrude shivered.

"What a dreadful thing! I wonder who it is?"

The front door of Colonel Brunell's house was open. Whinstone would have left Gertrude at the steps.

"Won't you come in and see mother?" she asked.

"I think not this morning," he answered.

"I must—I want to go round to Lady Clapham's and to Capell's again."

"Oh, yes, yes; do go! I hope you will have some good news."

He turned away; but at that moment Agatha ran down the steps crying:

"This is a fine thing, to be sure! Who could have thought it? Oh, it is too awful! Oh, you must be wicked, Mr. Whinstone!"

To the amazement of Whinstone and Gertrude, a policeman appeared on the top of the steps; and behind him the horrified faces of Colonel and Mrs. Brunell.

"I want you, sir. Will you come inside a moment?" said the constable to Whinstone.

Much mystified, and with a strange sinking at the heart, Whinstone sprang up the steps, followed by the terrified Gertrude. What dreadful thing were they going to hear concerning his friend Wilgorton?

"What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, that this should happen in our house!" cried Mrs. Brunell.

"The Lord's hand is heavy upon us!" ejaculated the Colonel.

"Don't take on, sir. Per'aps the gent will be able to clear hisself," said the policeman.

"Father! Mother! What is it?" cried Gertrude.

"What does it all mean?" demanded Whinstone.

"It means this, sir, if, excuse me, I can get a word in edgeways," said the constable. "A gentleman—a foreign gent—was murdered, or supposed to be, the night before last; and from information received a warrant has been issued for your arrest—your name being Frederick Whinstone. It seems you were on his track."

"I on his track! Whose track?"

interrupted Whinstone indignantly. "I was on no man's track. I don't know what you mean."

"Well, in course: But it is my dooty to inform you, sir, that what you say will be used as evidence against you. If you are hinnocent, as I hopes, you'll be able to clear yourself, no doubt. But you've got to come with me, and the quieter the better. You can have a keb, if you wishes it. Allus glad to oblige a gent in reason."

"But I must know more!" exclaimed Whinstone. "Who has been murdered? Did you say a foreigner? Is it—— In the name of Heaven, what have I to do with it?"

"Yes, constable, what has he to do with it?" asked the Colonel, for once startled out of his usual sanctimonious manner.

"What has he to do with it?" echoed Mrs. Brunell.

"Oh, Frederick, what does it mean?" cried again the pale and bewildered Gertrude.

"Ladies and gentlemen, don't excite yourselves. You will soon know all about it when he's been afore the coroner; you will," replied the constable. "It's my dooty to warn you——"

"Never mind about that. You need not warn me. Who has been murdered?"

"I rather think, excuse me, you know, by the look of you. Besides, I've already said it."

"I have not heard you."

"In course, I'll repeat it, then. It's a foreign gentleman as answers to the name of Lenoir—Monseer Lenoir. He was found shot in a railway carriage at Richmond."

"Good Heavens! You don't say so!"

"There you are, you see! You went to his lodgings more than once, and you was seen watching outside the house on the night of the murder, and there are other circumstances; and, so, from information received, you are arrested. You must come with me. I must do my dooty."

"Good Heavens!" muttered Whinstone again.

It is a common mistake to suppose that only the guilty appear overwhelmed with confusion and dismay when a charge is brought against them—that a man conscious of his innocence shows that innocence in his countenance and demeanour at once. The fallacy of this idea has been proved over and over again, and yet many people still cling obstinately to it. The reverse of it is very often the case.

Whinstone looked almost guilty. His

own position was unpleasant enough; but he feared for Wilgorton more than for himself, for he remembered with horror his friend's excited manner when he went out from Mr. Capell's house avowedly to find this man, this Lenoir, and with a pistol in his pocket:

"I went to a house in Farley Street to make an inquiry," he said. "I did not get the information I wanted, and I came away again. I saw no man there. I have never, to my knowledge, seen this man Lenoir."

"Oh, I dessay, sir. But the coroner sits at three, and you are to be there. Would you like a keb?"

"Yes, we will have a cab."

"Must you go, Frederick? Oh, it is too dreadful!" said Gertrude, much agitated.

"Yes; I suppose I must go," he answered, assuming a cheerfulness he was far from feeling. "All this will soon be explained: I shall be back here in an hour or two."

He held out his hand to her. She took it unhesitatingly, and returned his warm clasp:

"I hope it can be explained, and as quickly as you say, Mr. Whinstone," said Colonel Brunell. "No doubt it can be explained; but it is, nevertheless, a very unpleasant matter indeed. Decidedly unpleasant for us as well as for you. It is all a mystery to me how you can even be supposed to be concerned in such a dreadful affair. I can only hope that you will know where to look for the help and guidance you so much need. But, alas!—Gertrude, you had better go away. My dear, it is very unbecoming for you to be here. Agatha, you disobedient child, go upstairs!"

"Yes, Gertrude, go away. Go to the drawing-room, my child. Go anywhere. This is too dreadful!" said Mrs. Brunell.

They were still standing in the entrance-hall. Agatha made a feint of going upstairs; but paused on the third step, and stood leaning on the balustrade. Gertrude did not move.

"Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, I am sorry indeed that this has happened, and especially that it has happened here. Certainly, you must know that there is some frightful mistake—that everything can soon be explained. Will you allow one of your servants to fetch a cab?" said Whinstone:

"Yes; it is time we was movin'; and more than time," added the policeman.

A cab was fetched, and Whinstone, with a last look at Gertrude's white and terrified face, drove away with the constable:

(New and more exciting developments in the plot take place next month.)

THE F. A. F.

(—and other matters).

BY THE EDITOR.

I should like to draw my readers' special attention to the Fresh Air Fund stories on pages 368-9. This will be the fifteenth year of the F. A. F.'s work, and its merits are so well known that I need not enlarge upon them here, but I should like to mention the following points in connection with its work:

Its aim is to seek out and cheer the children of the slums.

During the last fourteen years no fewer than 1,403,000 slum children have been given a bright, happy day in the country, with two substantial meals as well.

The cripple children receive special attention, and often whole parties of 200 of them go out to Epping Forest or some other lovely country district.

The whole cost of a child's journey and two good meals of wholesome food is only ninepence. All expenses are borne by the promoters of the charity, and every ninepence received gives a poor child a long, happy day in the country.

Subscriptions will be gratefully received and acknowledged week by week in the columns of "Pearson's Weekly." They should be addressed: Hon. Sec., F. A. F., "Pearson's Weekly," Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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I wish to thank the hundreds of correspondents, known and unknown, who have written me letters and postcards of congratulation upon THE NOVEL MAGAZINE'S first birthday. It has been impossible to reply to each one individually, but I thank all the writers most sincerely for their good wishes and kind words of encouragement. I am glad THE NOVEL MAGAZINE is achieving its purpose, which is to be a magazine for everyone, not for a small section of the community or any particular class or clique.

x x x x x

Just a few more words of advice to would-be contributors, who purpose submitting stories to THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.

The time has, of course, gone by for padding stories with lengthy descriptions of scenery and the outward appearance of their characters, but on the other hand there is a danger of the modern magazine story becoming too snappy and curt. The plan and purpose of THE NOVEL MAGAZINE is on so generous a scale, that it gives scope for the writer's craft, and while constantly urging my contributors not to be pedantic or prolix, I must also ask them to guard against scrappiness. What is wanted is true imagination, as well as the exercise of clever dexterity in the management of a brilliant central idea. A story of 1500 to 2000 words does not, of course, afford much scope for development, but when 5000 to 7000 words are allowed it is a different matter. Long stories give a writer more chance for characterisation.

Originality is the needle in the bundle of hay—very hard to find. Don't think because you see a certain type of story in the current magazines, that that is the only type I care to consider. Good of its kind is good for us, and there is never any need to keep strictly to the beaten track.

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A splendid new summer serial entitled "The Secret Guest," by A. St. John Adcock, begins on page 825 of this number. It will be complete in three instalments. I also wish to draw your attention to the new series, "Thrilling Escapes," which will take the place of "Romances of the Road," and begins in next month's issue.

On the Right Road. ❀ ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By MRS. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

The story of a woman's temptation.

FATE had been very cruel to Lady Dangerfield. She had married young, her heart full of love and hope, her ideals bright and beautiful exceedingly. As a girl her life had been a lonely one in a home where reigned supreme a step-mother, a woman of great beauty and charm, but unsympathetic of nature, and tainted with that basest of all passions—jealousy.

Then the father died.

The world, to Ellaline, seemed as a wilderness. But a star arose in her darkened sky. She fell in love with Lord Dangerfield. She followed the star with uplifted, adoring eyes, her hands clasped upon her breast to still the beating of her heart.

Her knowledge of evil was small, for though her home had been loveless it had been clean. After marriage her eyes were opened very wide indeed. She recognised the fact that she had made an idol but to find it clay. She realised that the man she had married, beneath a distinguished appearance and plausible manner, was coarse-minded, sensual, and—unfaithful.

Very soon she read in the eyes of other women pity and wonder—wonder that she should have become the wife of a man notorious for the scandals that coiled like snakes about his name, pity that the bitter truth was being brought home to her day by day. She wrapped the mantle of pride about her like a royal robe, and forbade confidences or condolence by ignoring the need for either. But her beauty, that had been wondrous precious though never assertive, faded; and the look of patient endurance in her eyes made many fear to meet their glance.

As one year followed another things grew worse. Scandals that people spoke of behind curved fingers or outspread fans, stories that crept stealthily in the Society grass-land, made Ellaline spoken of as “poor Lady Dangerfield”—then some rather shunned her, fearing maybe to betray too vivid a knowledge of facts.

No child came to her to fill her arms and nestle against her breast; to smile when her kisses caressed it, or touch her pallid face with its soft little, pink-palmed hands. No woman, however sad, is quite desolate if little fingers cling to hers, if little feet toddle along by her side as she wends her lonely way.

Two years after her marriage Robert, her husband, looked calmly and critically at her one Summer's day when the London streets were gay with flowers, and said, in that even, cultured voice that had grown to her ears as the knell of all joy:

“I often wonder, Ellaline, why I married you.”

“So do I,” she answered, letting her hands, book and all, drop softly into her lap.

This amused him; he laughed softly to himself—drew out his cigarette-case, and left the room. Shortly after she heard the “teuff! teuff!” of his motor-car, and listened till the pulsating sound died in the distance.

Lord Dangerfield often left home in this casual manner, and would be absent for weeks, the while of his whereabouts or surroundings nothing was said. Silence was the sacrament of Ellaline's life; endurance the staff that was her stay; but, as she counted up years that might be coming, a deep, deep sigh would heave her breast.

If only death would come, and strike her shackles off—she would then find peace : : : peace and rest eternal : : .

Ellaline was nineteen when she married Lord Dangerfield, and had attained to seven-and-twenty years when the crisis of her life came about. The inevitable man came round the corner.

Ellaline met Leonard Urquhart—and “life was never the same again”; for, even if a passionate love and longing is never realised, its very memory is beautiful, and sings for ever in the heart like a bird in the dawning.

Things came about in the most commonplace way possible.

The London season was drawing to a close; everyone—more or less—felt like an over-ripe gooseberry—ready to drop. Everyone was longing for green fields, and shady lanes, and a soft ripple of running water. Those afternoon gatherings with which the season fizzles out were common; and—at one of these the man and woman whose story we have now to tell met, casually introduced to each other by one of London's most charming hostesses.

Tea and cucumber sandwiches figured at the interview, and someone in a far-off room sang, with mingled pathos and passion:

And now in silence we must part,
Since words and tears alike are vain,
All vain to ease my aching heart,
Since Fate hath rent our lives in twain.
Farewell—dear Love—Farewell!
Farewell—a long Farewell!

Leonard Urquhart, Major in the King's Own, had been in South Africa—returned—got his D.S.O.—and then suddenly found himself heir to great wealth, and a fair home in the Isle of Wight: an ideal home, where the murmured song of the sea made music all day long.

He was a man who had taken things very coolly—whether it were the “ping, ping,” of the enemy's fire, or the ups and downs of camp life. His friends were much more excited over his unlooked-for fortune than he was himself, and all those with daughters to marry took a very decided view of the need in which he stood of a capable and distinguished wife.

This view of things, however, did not seem to appeal to him. He went quietly on his way, and the current of his life was never deeply stirred—until he met the unhappy wife of Lord Dangerfield, met her at the ordinary “tea and toast” reception, and they talked softly together to the music in the distance that neither was destined ever to forget.

It is no use trying to analyse these wonderful magnetisms that grip, and thrill, and rend the lives of men and women—they are too deep, too madly mysterious for reason to grapple with:

Down the wide, flower-bedecked stairway, side by side, presently stepped Major Urquhart and Lady Dangerfield. The reception was thinning; the sandwiches were ruins; the soiled tea-cups straggled about here and there where people had set them down. It was time to go.

So they went—together; and Major Urquhart helped his companion into a hansom, gave the address, and then stood bare-headed, the sunshine touching his dark, close-cropped locks and gentle, clear, blue-grey eyes, while she drove away. Then he stood still on the kerb, and watched the hansom until it turned the corner of the square.

When it was once out of sight Leonard Urquhart felt as if something beautiful, desirable, enthralling, had gone out of his life. Pity was the feeling of which he was most keenly conscious, for he knew the woman's story—who did not? And he noted with reverential awe the placid grace of her demeanour, and recognised the fact of its being a mantle to cover the cruel wounds that Fate had inflicted upon her from the prying eyes of the crowd. The touch of her hand lingered in his all day; the sound of her voice was in his ears.

He knew that they should meet again—for had she not said, almost timidly, pleadingly:

“You will come and see me?”

Fer—strange and wondrous Fate!—the country home that she was going to was in that island “set in a silver sea”—that lovely spot where his own new home, clustered about with trees, surrounded by fair meadows pied with flowers and bracken, had, so far, wooed him in vain to wander in the woods and make himself a habitation and a name among its tenantry.

Things would be quite different now; and then there was that yacht, *The Phantom*, a pretty vessel to ride the bright waters of the straits; he had been in treaty for it; now he would hasten and conclude the agreement promptly. Lady Dangerfield would doubtless have guests staying with her; he might ask the whole house-party to sail on *The Phantom*: : : :

Then imagination claimed him for her own. He heard the ripple of the water against the prow; he felt the soft buffeting of the balmy breeze; he looked into the face of Ellaline Lady Dangerfield—and the world was all sunshine and sweet music: : : :

And his dream came true; only, it was more blinding sweet in reality than even his fancy had painted it; and, day by day, these two, this man and this woman, were drawn nearer and nearer together by the bands of a magnetic and irresistible sympathy. Everyone took it for granted that Leonard Urquhart and Lady Dangerfield were old friends; while several

neighbours looked upon them as related; and all went smooth, like oil pouring out of a flagon.

And what of Ellaline?

She did not worry her own heart with questionings. It was enough—nay, more than enough—that the heavy burdens that had pressed upon her life seemed to press less cruelly; she felt as if some tender hand had touched and lifted them—and even the whispered scandals attached to her husband's name stung less keenly, seeming as things set very far away.

Never had the world looked so bright and gay. For long years her heart had been silent as the Winter time in which no birds sing; now it was trembling as with the rustle of the Spring, and the time of the singing of birds was come. Yet she did not recognise this light and the music as the radiance and the ecstasy of—Love!

If Leonard Urquhart had a keener knowledge, if the acrid sound of a warning cry sometimes hurt in the hearing, he made no sign. The coil that was slowly but surely incircling these two unfortunate entities showed, as yet, no lurid, ominous flash of hidden fire—*The Phantom* sailed on the sea that was golden with reflected sunset light; life was like a Summer day.

Then came the bolt from the blue.

Ellaline's guests had left her—she herself was about to return to town, earlier than most people, since she loved the quiet of the empty time. *The Phantom* was about to bear its master to the shores of the Mediterranean, for Leonard Urquhart began to feel keenly the dangers of his companionship with Lady Dangerfield, and—like the true man he was—shrank from the thought of bringing even the shadow of reproach upon the name of a woman so passionately dear to him, and so heavily burdened by cruel Fate already.

And yet he had faced death day by day, and hour by hour, in South Africa, and known no smallest sense of fear; while now his whole being shrank from the ordeal of parting with a woman—of hearing the sound of her voice no more; of feeling the touch of her hand no more; of meeting the gentle yet unconscious tenderness of her eyes no more; and life beyond that parting took to him the form and semblance of an arid desert—where no birds should sing, no flowers blossom, nor Summer ever come again.

This very day he would tell her gently, tenderly, and in such fashion as should least assail her armour of self-control. He knew

—better than she did, poor soul!—the pain that would wring her heart, drive the colour from her cheek, and set her sweet lips trembling.

There lay *The Phantom*, bathed in the golden sunlight, whose radiance was softly cleft by the wafting of white wings as the sea-gulls swooped and dived. It all looked passing fair, but the sea—the sea sobbed and sobbed in little, pitiful waves against the bows of the yacht, and seemed to sing the melody of that song—the song that haunted him whether he would or no—the song they had heard the day they first met:

And now in silence we must part,
Since words and tears alike are vain,
All vain to ease my aching heart,
Since Fate hath rent our lives in twain.
Farewell—dear Love—Farewell!

That song had "caught on." The band had played it on the esplanade the night before; a man with a mandoline sang it on the pier; and yet it seemed to belong to them—to be their very own, his and hers—the music to which the first notes of their tragic love story had been set.

He clenched his hands tight, and the blood rushed up to his brow as he thought of what this woman's life had been—of the entanglement of shame that had encompassed her, of the furtive wagging of tongues that had pursued her like a blast foul with pestilential touch and stifling vapour.

It was cruel—cruel; and now was to come "the most unkindest cut of all."

He had been on board *The Phantom*, had a talk with the captain about the weather, ordered all things to be ready to start late that evening, came on shore again, sauntered towards the little sea-board town that nestled among the tree-clad, grassy slopes—first lighted a fresh cigarette—and then caught sight of the newspaper boy coming out of the rustic-looking post-office.

Major Urquhart bought a paper, and then, swinging it lazily as he walked, took his way homewards.

* * * * *

Lady Dangerfield was in the morning-room—that pretty room whose balcony looked on to the sea. From this balcony a flight of shallow steps ran down to a little landing-stage, where a couple of boats bobbed softly up and down, and the Summer's-day hush of the room was lulled by the soft sighing of the water as it broke in tiny wavelets against the wood-work, and kissed the prows of the little skiffs.

In the distance lay *The Phantom*, with

a faint haze of white steam about it that might have puzzled Lady Dangerfield had she chanced to look that way—but she was too busy writing letters and signing cheques, in a word, facing those matter-of-fact duties that fall to the lot of a hostess whose house-party has just scattered.

Yet at times she seemed lost in thought. She was wondering at herself—at the quiet sense of comfort that had come over her of late; at the strange sensation of all her shame and sorrow being unable to hurt her so cruelly as it once had done.

She was thinking—but the door opened, and Gillingham the butler entered with all his wonted quiet dignity, also with a somewhat overdone expression of ignorance and composure—a mental attitude slightly contradicted by the trembling of the hand that held a silver salver on which reposed the daily paper.

"The paper, my lady," said Gillingham, passing his hand across his clean-shaven mouth and chin, as though to iron out any lines that might be there.

Her ladyship uttered a quiet "Thanks," and bent over her writing-case again, giving the paper a little push as if to put it out of the way.

Perhaps it was as well she did not glance through the open door, and catch a sight of Somers, her faithful and devoted maid, seated disconsolately on a lounge with a filmy white muslin apron thrown over her head, and her hands beating on her knee. She did indeed hear some muttered words from Gillingham, though the sight was hidden from her of that worthy grasping Somers firmly but kindly by the arm, and leading her towards the door that led to the servants' quarters.

At last, laying down her pen with a sigh of satisfaction at work completed, Lady Dangerfield lifted the paper, and, strolling to the balcony, opened it slowly as she leant against the balustrade. : : :

Had anyone been watching her slight figure, they would have seen a sudden rigidity seize and hold it. Then came a spasmodic rush to the shelter of the great cushioned couch by the flower-filled grate, and an exceeding bitter cry.

"I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it! Oh, the shame of it—the shame of it!—and I—his wife. : : : I—the woman who bears his name—I must suffer—I—Ellaline. Father's little Ellaline that he loved so dearly. : : :"

Her fingers gripped and tore at the paper,

as she sprang to her feet and flung the pieces on the ground, but in all her mad passion were no tears, only pain and cruel anguish, and the torment of soul that is worse than a stinging flail, the searing blast of fire.

What was all the past compared with this new scandal—this story of nameless depravity that would set women's tongues wagging in furtive corners, and echo like a crash of discordant notes through groups of men gathered together in their clubs? Where should she hide her head from the storm and the tempest, from the scathing pity in the eyes of men, and shame in the averted looks of women?

And yet she was this man's wife—his wife—not, thank God, the mother of his children—but, still—his wife. She crushed her hands together—and hissed out the title in a raucous whisper: "His wife—his wife : : : his wife. : : :"

Yet in an instant that self-control of which she had learnt the lesson so well in all the bitter years came back to her, as Gillingham swung open the door, and announced :

"Major Urquhart."

They stood and faced each other in silence until the door had closed.

Then, without any formal handshake, they drew near to one another, looking at each other with pitiful, inquiring eyes. Then Leonard Urquhart made one mad effort after conversational self-possession.

"I ought to apologise for calling at such an early hour . . . " he began lamely. But Ellaline silenced him.

"Hush!" she said, holding up her hand with a warning gesture. "Do not speak to me like that . . . it is not true . . . you have come because—your heart, your kind, tender heart prompted you to do so—you have seen—you have read—you *know*." And she pointed to the paper, rent in twain, upon the carpet. "You came because you felt for me in my humiliation—because you wanted to help me."

He had taken her hand in his, and now he raised it to his lips, and kissed it long and tenderly. Words seemed for a while denied to him.

"I have been looking at all the luxury that surrounds me—noting how beautiful is this desolate home of mine—and remembering what Tolstoi says in 'The Powers of Darkness': 'It seems that gold can't keep tears from falling.' Ah! how true that is! Why, the poorest woman who walks the streets to sell a few bunches of flowers is a

happier woman than I : : a happier woman than I."

Urquhart had dropped his face upon the hand he held so closely, and Ellaline felt the scalding heat of a man's tears.

She laid her hand on the dark head bowed so low before her:

"You are very good to me," she said: "Very—very—good to me. : : : Do you know that since I have known you—since that day when we met at that reception in town, and you put me into the cab afterwards, and sent me home—things have seemed so much, much easier to bear. Yes! even the worst things—the very worst things of all."

He held both her hands now—had raised his head, and was looking into her face with eyes passion-laden, yet softened by an infinite pity:

"Do you remember the song the woman sang that day—in the next room? And yet we heard every note. : . How did it go?"

And now in silence we must part,

Since words and tears alike are vain—

I heard it on the pier the other night. A man was singing it—so sweet and sad it sounded."

He saw that she was deathly pale and spoke dreamily, as one who wandered in thought, and he led her to the broad couch, and made her sit down, opening the window behind her, that the breeze might blow more freely through the room:

Then he took his stand before her, folding his arms, and looking down upon her, and his face—well-nigh as white as her own—took a look of stern resolve, and he bit his lips a moment, keeping silence.

"I have never said much to you," said Ellaline, "of the years since I married my husband—of the misery and shame I have suffered—of things—almost as vile—that have led up to this last blow; but we have been great friends, have we not? you and I; and I am quite, quite sure you will be very glad to know that you have greatly comforted me—and strengthened me. People have often been sorry for me and pitied me very much; but pity hurts and burns—I loathe it: It has been so different with the friendship that you have given me : : : so — so — different. : : : I suppose people told you about me, and you were very, very sorry, and tried your best—your very best—to help me. : : : You know it has been hard work sometimes to keep any courage in me : : : and yet : . : I have tried—but now—now—I have

lost heart—have lost heart. Oh, the shame of it—the shame of it!—and I bear his name—I am his wife. : : ."

Ellaline's beautiful eyes became suffused with tears, and then they were hidden against the cushions of the couch, and smothered sobs shook her delicate frame.

Leonard Urquhart bent down quickly, gathered the torn sheets of the morning paper, crushed them in his hand, and dropped them into a large, empty vase that stood near:

Only just in time, for the tearful face was lifted to his—the poor, cold hands stretched out to him:

"Do you despise me?"

He sank down upon the couch by her side, tenderly folding an arm about her shoulders:

"Despise you?" he said, speaking low, yet with strenuous passion in each note of his voice. "No! I love you—love you—love you—with all my heart, and soul, and strength—love you as—I believe—never yet a man loved a woman."

She peered into his face with quiet yet wondering eyes:

"You love me? Then it is *Love* that has made us so happy—not friendship, as I thought; Love that has made the burden of my sorrow easier to bear?"

He crushed her to him:

"Yes—Love—Love that will clasp you—hold you—lift you from this mire into which you have fallen—Love that will never fail you: Oh, my darling, have you not read it in my eyes a thousand times?"

"I do not know," she said softly, "but it is very precious—very beautiful—now that you have told me: It is so long—so very, very long—since anyone loved me: Leonard, I think I had forgotten what Love was like."

"Ellaline," he said passionately, "you will never forget what it is like again—never—in all the years : : : in all the years. : : ."

He bowed his face upon her lap, and, taking her hands in his, laid them on his head as though to plead with her for her benediction on the words he uttered.

"Do you mean," she said, as she gently caressed his dark, rippling hair, "do you mean that we shall be together—you and I—all the years?"

He started to his feet, and stood before her erect and tall; he straightened his shoulders, and folded his arms, as a man does who is about to enter into a conflict:

"Listen to me, Ellaline," he said, speaking

low, yet with strenuous earnestness. "I want to lay my heart bare to your dear eyes—I want to let you read the very secrets of my soul. Yesterday I resolved to leave you. Yes! Loving you with all a man's passion, with all a lover's tenderness, resolved to leave you, though I knew it meant desolation—anguish—sorrow—unspeakable—because—it seemed best so—for you—my darling! I saw the noble battle you were waging—and—I dare not weaken you for the conflict—but now—this fresh sorrow—this sordid scandal—has changed me—beaten me back. I : : : I : : : want you, Ellaline. Come to me—my dear one—give your life to me—let me do with it as I will. Nothing mean, nothing pitiful, shall ever touch you—our lives will be like a beautiful dream. : : ."

She looked up at him wonderingly.

"I think I must have loved you all the time," she said, "from the very, very first : : : from the day we met in Cadogan Gardens—and heard the song—the song that has followed us—even here."

She had risen and come to his side—and he clasped her close, and looked into her face with eyes almost as wet as her own.

"You will come, Ellaline?" he said, his voice trembling with passion; "you will trust me—you will have no fear—you need have none—I will ask you for nothing you would not like to give until you are my lawful wife. My wife, Ellaline—my wife—how beautiful it sounds, doesn't it, dear? Speak to me, dearest—just one little word! Say: 'I love you, Leonard—I will trust you.' : : ."

"I love you, Leonard—I will trust you," came as the echo of his words.

He led her towards the open balcony from where, swaying gently on the bright water, *The Phantom* could be seen:

"See," he said, "she will be ready to start in a few hours—and then. : : ." He hesitated—put his two hands on her shoulders, and looked questioningly into her face.

"Ellaline, you are not going to take this step unwillingly? There is no fear in your heart?"

"No, none." And she bent and kissed the hand that rested on her shoulder. He spoke gravely.

"You must see there can be no other way—no other way; you cannot remain here to meet—your husband—you could not look into his eyes and recognise his knowledge of all you know. I will go presently and see

Pauncefort, my captain—I will find out exactly the hour the yacht will be ready—and then—I will come and tell you—and you—you will be ready too. Bring no jewellery—no money—away with you—nothing to remind you of this—this sordid slavery. We will go round to London—and you can get all that is needful for our wanderings in foreign lands. Tears again, dearest! Ah, yes! I know—tongues have wagged—they will wag quicker now; forget them—dear one—they will soon forget you! No one remembers anything very long in these vehement days."

He had folded her in his arms, and kissed the tears from her cheek. Then he held her off from him, looking at her curiously.

"Why, now you are smiling, dearest—and yet, it is a sad little smile."

"It seems so strange," she answered, "so : : : so droll, for anyone to care about me—to put their arms round me : : : to care to kiss away my tears—you know I am strangely alone in the world, Leonard—I have no one to care for me—since my father died. : : ."

"You poor child!"

"Yes, that is what I have felt like—a child . . . alone : : : in the dark. : : ."

"You shall never feel alone in the dark again, Ellaline—I will bring the light of Love into your life—of Love, pure and true—and faithful—even unto death. : : ."

"I must go," he said, after a pause; "is there a man down below with the boats?"

"Yes, the two boatmen are always there."

"Well, I will go on board—and then come back and tell you the hour of sailing, so that you will be able to get what things you want ready: I daresay I shall be half-an-hour or so, as there will be some little business matters to settle; but that will not matter, dearest, will it? Pauncefort said the tide would suit best about nine. Fancy a moonlight sail down the creek—and the knowledge that there will be no more partings—no more good-byes—only joy nestling in our hearts! Ellaline—Ellaline—you have made me the happiest man on earth."

"I am happy too," she said gently, "and I had almost forgotten what it felt like."

One more kiss, and Urquhart was gone down the shallow steps; another moment and Ellaline was listening to the pulsing splash of the oars. : : :

Her heart beating fast—her lips still thrilling with the touch of her lover's kiss—Ellaline sat down by the little writing-table,

leaning her face on her hands, and striving to collect her thoughts, and face the strange aspect that life was taking for her—striving to peer with the eyes of her mind into a future that blinded her with its brightness and its joy unspeakable:

No single doubt of Leonard's truth and fealty crossed her mind, no single misgiving gave an entrance to fear or doubt: Through the lagging years she had led a loveless life; she would be loveless no longer—the night was passing—the dawn of a new day was near : : : the flowers would bloom beneath her feet—the singing of birds would make music for her as she went up on her way.

Then came a soft tap at the door, and a troubled voice :

"My lady—my lady!" And there stood Somers, pale and woebegone. She was twisting her dainty apron in her hands:

"I was not sure you were alone, my lady—Gillingham said he didn't think Major Urquhart was gone, for the bell hasn't sounded—but Beilby saw a boat leave the steps—and I wanted to come to you so much: Oh, my lady! my lady!" And the girl was down upon her knees—her face hidden in her mistress' lap, her arms thrown round that trembling form: The girl's grief brought the reality of things to Ellaline; reminded her of the terrible news in the paper—the story of shame she had almost forgotten:

She bent over the bowed head, touching it tenderly:

"You have been so good and faithful to me, Somers—so good and faithful: : :"

"Have been? My lady!" cried Somers, springing to her feet; "don't say that, my lady—I always *will* be—I can't bear to know how you must suffer, and feel I can do nothing to help you, my lady—it breaks my heart—it does indeed."

Her ladyship looked sadly pale, thought Somers, and her eyes had a strange light in them—her voice, too, sounded different—what was going to happen?

Her ladyship's next words filled her with greater amazement still:

"Somers, I am going up to town to-night: Will you pack all that I shall need for : : : two or three days—in a hand-bag—and leave it ready in my room?"

"Am I not to go with you, my lady?"

"No, Somers—not this time. I must try to get on without you—my good girl: : :"

One sob had burst from the girl's lips, when Gillingham's sepulchral tones close

behind her made her start and gulp down the next one that was coming:

"Miss Somers—you're upsettin' of her ladyship somethin' awful—and here's a letter by hexpress messenger, requirin' her ladyship's best attention: By your leave, my lady." And Miss Somers was led gently but firmly from the room, and the door closed resolutely.

On the writing-table stood a silver salver, and on this a sealed letter marked: "By Express Messenger."

Lady Dangerfield looked for a moment with quiet wonder at the letter: Who could be sending her so urgent a message?

Then slowly she broke the seal: The rich light from the balcony windows fell full upon her face, and showed a strange and wonderful transformation: The face became, as it were, a mask—colourless—expressionless—yet full of a mad despair.

She read the letter through—then again from end to end—then thrust it into the bosom of her dress—rose and went with faltering steps on to the balcony, hanging over the window-bar, and stretching out her arms towards the sea, while deep-drawn, tearless sobs rent her breast: : : :

The door opened with a characteristic swing, and Gillingham—looking somewhat pale and drawn—announced in a voice of forced calm :

"His lordship has arrived, my lady." And the air was jerked by the loud "teuff! teuff!" of a motor-car:

Ellaline by a mighty effort recovered her self-possession—bent her head in acknowledgment of the announcement, and passed with quiet dignity from the room:

The noisy breath of the motor-car had passed round to the stables, and died away: The door was closed—the room that had been the theatre of a passionate love-story was curiously silent. Not for long, though—for from the lane that passed under the window, open behind the great couch, came the soft twang of a mandoline, and then a voice, mellow and tender—the voice of a wandering minstrel:

And this was what he sang :

And now in silence we must part,
Since words and tears alike are vain,
All vain to ease my aching heart,
Since Fate hath rent our lives in twain.
Farewell—dear Love—Farewell!

God shield thee, dear, though dark the night,
The past Fate cannot rend away—
We bear within our hearts a light
Shall light us till the dawn of day.
Farewell—dear Love—Farewell!

"Our song, dearest," said Urquhart gaily, as he came up the steps from the sea—"how strange!"

Lady Dangerfield had only just entered the room and closed the door, and as she stood, still gripping the latch, the sad refrain of the song outside floated into the room:

Farewell—dear Love—Farewell!

Farewell!—a long Farewell!

Major Urquhart came towards her with eyes aflame, and outstretched hands:

"I have only been gone twenty minutes, and yet—it has seemed an age! We must be on board, dearest, before nine."

He was full of boyish glee; and then—all at once—he stood quite still, and gazed at her wonderingly—then moved a step towards her: : : :

But she put out a warning hand:

"Do not come near me—do not touch me," she said, "I could not bear even to feel your hand on mine."

"Ellaline! Ellaline!" he cried under his breath, "What is it? What has changed you so? Speak! do not keep me in this torture of wonder and amaze—has something bewitched you while I have been away? Speak! Oh, my darling, have pity on me—for I love you so!"

She had moved to the mantelpiece and held its ledge with one trembling hand to give herself some support, while the other was pressed upon her breast, as if to still its heaving:

"Leonard," she said, swaying slightly as she spoke, "you must sail in *The Phantom* to-night—alone."

"Alone!" he cried: "Ellaline, are you mad? What has changed you so? Oh, my darling—are you going to fail me—now?"

"I must," she said, drawing her breath with a horrible, raucous sound, "there is no other way; my—husband has returned home."

"What of that? That only means that you must come away at once."

"I cannot—I cannot."

She moaned out the words, letting her face drop upon her hands, now folded on the mantelpiece: Then—suddenly—she raised her head, looking him full in the face; she moved into the light that glimmered from the sea—she was transformed—transfigured, filled with a great resolve—a courage like that with which men meet death on the battlefield:

"There is something that stands between us—that must stand between us. Oh, my

beloved, the song told us the truth—though we did not heed: 'Fate hath rent our lives in twain.' And now it is farewell—only that, only that."

Urquhart was no coward: He folded his arms across his breast, lifted his head, and spoke out clearly:

"Tell me what this thing is?"

Ellaline pulled the letter from out her bosom:

"It is this," she said; "it came by Express Messenger—it came a few moments before Lord Dangerfield's arrival: : : : It is from a celebrated—oculist—in Harley Street: It tells me that—my husband—is going rapidly blind—that total blindness is his doom—though—he does not know it: : : : Leonard, I cannot leave him—you would not love me any more if I did. You are a true gentleman—a true knight—you could not bear to look at me if you knew that I had left a man who was my—my husband—to grope through life—a blind man without a guide: Leonard—I must stay with him: I must be 'the very eyes of him.' I *shall* be—but—I shall never forget how you have loved me—how I have loved you—and I shall always pray for you—pray for you: Oh, my darling: : : :"

Urquhart had sunk upon the couch and covered his face with his hands. He dare not look upon her—so brave—so beautiful—so *right*! Yes! he must own that—even to his own undoing:

There was silence, broken by a man's bitter sob—and then—

Someone calling—and the sound coming nearer and nearer:

"Ellaline—Ellaline—where are you?"

A fumbling touch at the door-latch—the door opening—and a tall, big-made man in a light-brown Chesterfield, and with a brown hat swinging in his hand, came warily and feeling his way into the room:

"It's infernally misty this morning, or my eyes are not much better for old Chesney's fumbling with them—can't say which, but come along with me, like a good girl, down to the stables—I want to see how the old mare is—and, if I have your arm, I shall know I'm on the right road: : : :"

He did not see Major Urquhart, and Ellaline made no sign—only slipped her husband's hand through her arm, and led him from the room, looking back as she moved away with eyes love-laden with a passionate farewell—while her lips, white as those of the dead—said softly:

"Yes—*On the Right Road*."

A Harvest of Rubies.

By C. JELF-SHARP and GUY D. RICKETTS.

Telling of a mining engineer's bid for fortune.

IT has been roundly stated that nine out of every ten mining companies pass through the process of liquidation at some period or other in their career. As George Flett sat in an up-country Burmese bungalow and reviewed his recent experiences as a mining engineer, he would have been inclined to indorse that statement.

The company, whose servant he had been until the arrival of the last mail, had just placed its affairs in the hands of a receiver, and Flett was now calculating what proportion of his nominal salary for the last six months he would be likely to put in his pocket.

He was essentially a man of action. Here he was stranded, almost penniless, at an up-country station in Burmah, with no prospect of receiving further supplies of money from England for months to come. In the meanwhile it was necessary to increase his small store of rupees, and he turned his thoughts to the white man's last resource—trading.

He sent for Nurudin, his headman of coolies, and informed him that he intended to discontinue mining operations for the present, and to embark instead on a trading venture. Had Nurudin any suggestions to make as to the most profitable lines of business?

It appeared that Nurudin had very definite ideas on the subject. There were, he said, large profits to be made out of dealing in rubies, if the business were conducted on right lines. Under a promise of profound secrecy, he gave Flett the details of a scheme by means of which he might become rich with ease and speed.

The Government of Burmah, ever anxious to hand over larger and larger surpluses to the poorer provinces of India, exacts a royalty of 30 per cent. of the value of all rubies found in the country. No search for precious stones is allowed, even on private land, except under agreement with

the Government, which invariably contains this onerous royalty clause.

According to the official returns, no rubies had ever been found anywhere but in a certain district of Upper Burmah: Nurudin now stated that he had reliable information that a few Burmans were carrying on secret mining operations in an entirely different locality, and as the resulting rubies never came under the notice of the Government officials, they might be bought at very much less than the proper market value. Nurudin now offered to initiate Flett into this lucrative method of dealing in precious stones, on the sole condition that he would not attempt to re-sell the stones in Burmah, and so spoil the local market.

Far down in Lower Burmah, close to the Siamese frontier and many hundreds of miles from the well-known "Burmah Ruby Mines" property, there is a tiny native village in the very midst of almost impenetrable jungle. The native route to the village can hardly be called a path, or even a track; a born jungle man could not follow it through the tangled growth unless he had been previously acquainted with the system of signs by which the way is indicated.

This route, Nurudin stated, was known to only twenty Burmans. The village, called by them "The Village of a Thousand Rubies," was situated near a stream which had eaten its way through an old deposit of gravel. From this gravel the rubies were obtained by washing a portion of the deposit in an ordinary gold-miner's pan.

It was well known to all the Burmans who were acquainted with the spot, that the place was under the special protection of a powerful Nat or demon, who strongly resented any disturbance of his jungle home. He barely permitted these twenty Burmans to work it in a small way, in return for many offerings on his numerous shrines.

Every day one hundred candles were burnt to propitiate him; scores of sheets of thin

gold leaf were pinned upon his shrines; the finest flowers of the jungle decked his joss-house; daily offerings of fruit and rice were placed upon his sacred bamboo platforms: In return, he suffered his treasure of rubies to be rifled—but not to any serious extent.

Redoubled offerings might cajole him to permit a white man to visit his haunt without succumbing to a deadly fever; but Nurudin emphatically declared that Flett must bring no other European with him, and must promise on his honour as a sahib never to divulge the secret of the mine:

Flett questioned Nurudin very closely: He inquired why the discoverers of the deposit had not obtained a mining lease of the place from the Government, so as to enable themselves to work the mine openly and on a large scale, instead of burdening themselves with all the pains and penalties of secrecy.

To this Nurudin had replied that they had had three good reasons for their course of action.

First, they saved the 30 per cent. royalty, and could, therefore, afford to sell the rubies cheaply; second, the place was within the area covered by the prospecting license of a gold-mining company, who had, therefore, the first claim to the lease of the deposit; third, the demon would certainly not permit any such desecration of his chosen haunt.

Nurudin also stated that the gold-mining company had no idea of the existence of rubies in their area, and would probably abandon their right very shortly. It was possible that the Burmans might then think of applying for the lease; but the time for bargains in stones would have passed away: It therefore behoved Flett to set out for the place at once.

A few days later Flett might have been seen toiling along a little-used road from the coast to the Siamese border. With him was another Englishman named Ryan, who was something of a puzzle to Flett:

In the East every man's status, occupation, and financial position are perfectly well known to all his friends and neighbours: His business is as apparent to his fellow white men as to himself. But Ryan seemed to be an exception to this rule; Flett was quite unable to "place" him, and came to the conclusion that he was a gentleman at large who liked to spend his time in strange and out-of-the-way places.

Flett had been very glad of his company up to a certain point, but now he began to find it rather embarrassing. They were

nearing the track which turned off through the jungle for "The Village of a Thousand Rubies." At all costs he must get rid of Ryan before this track was reached: An excuse for doing so was not very easy to find.

Under ordinary circumstances Flett would probably have told Ryan that he no longer desired his company; but this plan was not now available, as it might awaken all sorts of suspicions in Ryan's mind. Finally, Flett hit upon an equally effective and more dramatic solution of the difficulty; he resolved to give him the slip during the night.

The two were occupying a native "rest-house"—one of those wayside huts erected by the charitable Burmese for the use of homeless wayfarers. When they had retired to rest, Flett and Nurudin, under cover of darkness, succeeded in slipping away into the jungle, leaving no trace behind.

They hurried on through the night at their utmost speed; their path was only lighted by the flickering flare of an aromatic Burmese torch, and it was difficult at times to find their way. In fact, they could not have done so but for the help of a Burman who had joined them at the rest-house, and who had originally given Nurudin the information about the mines.

Very soon after they had taken the side-track which led directly to the deposit, Flett began to understand how it was that the mine had not been discovered sooner: He was thoroughly used to roughing it in most parts of the world; and he had had considerable practice in jungle wood-craft, but he had never in all his experience traveled over such a route.

There seemed to be no indication of path or track at all. They had to wriggle through impervious walls of tangled growth, and even such an expert as Nurudin admitted that progress was difficult. As for Flett, he was every moment torn by thorny creepers, or bruised by falls among the clinging undergrowth.

Towards evening their guide told them that they were approaching a little village that had been established as a sort of half-way house and base of supplies for the mine: Some few rubies had been discovered in this locality; perhaps the sahib might be able to purchase them:

But for the moment Flett's first need was rest; rubies had temporarily ceased to interest him: The village consisted of half-a-dozen huts of bamboo and palm-leaf; the

best of these was put at the sahib's disposal, cocoa-nuts and other local creature comforts were presented to him, and he was told that inquiries would be made in the village for saleable rubies.

All the next day Flett rested, and towards evening an old and wrinkled Burmese woman craved an audience with him. From behind some mysterious fold in her ancient and tattered garment she produced a few small stones, rough cut in native fashion.

She was willing to sell them cheap to the Great Master; she had found them herself and they were fine stones; yet she would sell them cheap, for she was too old and weak to take them to the town, where they would command a good price; she could not trust such rubies out of her possession; they were too fine, and the temptation to steal them might be too great even for her son.

Flett examined the stones carefully. It was a thrilling moment for him. He felt that on that one examination hung the whole issue for good or ill of his journey. If these stones were rubies it was certain that a valuable mine had been discovered, from which he might reap rich profits. If, on the other hand, they were mere spinels or garnets, which the natives had mistaken for rubies, it was very unlikely that his trip would even pay for itself.

Flett was a man who had gathered knowledge on most subjects. He was perfectly familiar with that peculiar tinge of red, known as "pigeon's-blood," which is so characteristic of the Oriental ruby. It is a colour that is rarely seen in less valuable stones, and Flett, with a thrill, immediately recognised it in the stones before him. He bought them at less than a quarter their market price as rubies.

In the cool of the evening he strolled about the little clearing in which the village was built. He was feeling very satisfied with himself and with things in general. He was curious to see something of the geology of this jeweled district, and penetrated a little way into the jungle in the direction of the mines, in the hope of finding a "section." In this he was disappointed, but he caught a sight of something that astonished and puzzled him immensely. He could hardly believe his own eyes. Surely he must be mistaken! Not far ahead of him, and pushing on through the jungle in the direction of the mines, was his late friend Ryan.

What could he be doing here? In an instant the answer occurred to Flett; he was

a competing buyer, and having found that he had been forestalled at the first village, he was making a rush for the mine itself.

Flett never took long to make up his mind. He decided at once to set out for the mine within the hour, and to strain every effort to reach it first. Physically, Ryan was no match for him, and he did not intend to let the harvest be reaped by that gentleman for want of a little muscular effort. He had not come all this way for the gleanings, but for the crop itself.

He roused up his servant and Burmese guide, explained the state of the case to them, and set off at once for the mine. The Burman proved equal to the occasion. By varying their route slightly, he succeeded in bringing them to the mining village without passing Ryan; doubtless the latter, expecting them to take the usual route and thinking them far behind him, would push on in comparatively leisurely fashion. At any rate, inquiries elicited the information that he had not arrived before them.

The harvest of rubies that Flett reaped was really amazing. He computed their value roughly at not less than £5,000, and he had paid for them barely £500, a sum he had contrived to borrow in order to finance the venture. He bought every stone in the place, and arranged to return in two months' time to buy the entire output of the mine.

He set off on his return journey with the pleasant feeling that he was a made man. As he left he noticed through the half-closed door of one of the huts the face of his rival Ryan. He laughed to himself as he thought of the barren harvest that he would reap.

Flett now pushed on rapidly for the coast, and took steamer for Calcutta; he knew that he would there find a ready market for his precious stones.

* * * * *

"Can I see the manager—at once? No, thanks—I must interview your principal personally—my business is of great importance."

Flett thus waved away the smart young jeweler's assistant, who, having insinuated broadly that his chief was not at the beck and call of every stray and shabby intruder, moved reluctantly across the handsome office, and paused to whisper a word in the ear of the sharp-faced Eurasian cashier in the glass-fronted desk at right angles to the counter.

It was sufficiently obvious that attention was being drawn to the stranger's suspicious "out-at-elbowness"; and Flett could have

laughed aloud as he noted how the beady black eyes from behind the glass screen noted his every movement during the two or three moments' pause that ensued.

Inserting his hand under his tattered coat in order to unfasten the belt that contained in wash-leather pockets his treasure-trove, his amusement was increased almost to the point of hilarity as an ominous click, and the glitter of a small, dark object in the cashier's grasp, suggested how the movement had been interpreted.

Impertinent suspicions, indeed! But they would sing a different tune soon, these crafty Eurasians—envy and wonder would soon supersede their sense of smug superiority!

Flett's agreeable reflections were broken by the advent of the manager, who adjusted the sleeves of his coat as he crossed the office, his usual bland suavity slightly tempered by annoyance suggestive of an interrupted siesta.

"Being extremely busy just now, sir, I shall be obliged if you state your business without delay."

His tone was, to say the least, impatient, but Flett's mood rose far above such trifling disturbances. With an air of studied non-chalance:

"I shall not detain you long," he said. "I just dropped in to ask what you think of these few stones?" And he poured a stream of rubies on to the counter.

A shaft of brilliant sunshine flashed across the precious heap. How they gleamed and sparkled—the true, rich, deep, pigeon's-blood colour!

Flett caught his breath sharply, and glanced exultantly at the face of the jeweller-merchant, to note the first impression of amazement.

But the great man seemed wondrously self-controlled. He passed his fingers through the treasure-trove disrespectfully—nay, even contemptuously.

"Very fine specimens—of their kind," he remarked. "It's wonderful how these Birmingham manufacturers hit off the pigeon's-blood colour. I suppose this lot has been sown by their Burmah agent, young—what's his name?"

He called across the office to the two assistants who were sniggering audibly by the desk. "De Costa, de Silva—what's the name of the paste-ruby trader?"

"It is Bryan, I think—no, Ryan, that is it," answered the Eurasian, and with scarcely suppressed giggles of "Oh, my, oh, my, what a fool!" he returned to his account-books.

"And now, sir," resumed the manager, "what of this important business of yours?"

But the shop was empty. Flett had somewhat abruptly taken his departure—without even pausing to garner his Harvest of Rubies.

✱ ✱ *THE BOY WHO LIVES NEXT DOOR.* ✱ ✱

*The boy who lives next door
Has freckles on his face,
His ears are red, and hang
Away out into space.
And when I hear a dog ki-yi
And see it flee in terror, I
Can quickly guess the cause—
'Tis merely that one more
Poor little victim knows
A boy resides next door.*

*He runs across the lawn
I've nursed with jealous care,
And in the Summer time
Knocks down the flowers there!
It seems to give him pure delight
To yell and shout with all his might.
And every week or so
A pebble finds its way
Against a pane of glass,
For which I have to pay.*

*The little child whose love
Is all to me, one day
Was stricken suddenly
When I was far away:
The boy who lives next door forgot
To yell and shout, but ran and brought
The doctor to the bed.
And when I came at last,
Shrank from me with a look
Of pity as I passed.*

*The boy who lives next door,
Brought in his tops and gun
And pocketfuls of trash
To please my little one;
He played beside my darling's bed,
Turned cartwheels, and stood on his head,
And God was good to me—
Let's wait awhile before
We utterly condemn
"The boy who lives next door."*

This little story, written from actual facts, is dedicated by special permission to K. S. Ranjitsinhji, so long Sussex captain, and ever associated with all that is best in the cricket world. His characteristic good nature in playing in a private cricket match in the midst of his County engagements, gave universal pleasure to all who witnessed his superb play on the occasion.

Ranji to the Rescue.

By M. GRAEME.

IT was for Rex's birthday. Birthdays in the family were kept up religiously, no matter what age they represented, and brother Rex at twenty-five was no exception: The great day was due in a fortnight, and we girls—and Charlie and Harry too, for the matter of that—wanted a dance or a *fête*, or a picnic. But it was for Rex to choose, and we couldn't get his answer:

He wanted time, he said, and he hadn't made up his mind, and a thousand other excuses, but it meant he was leaving it to Gertie to decide. We all knew that he loved the very ground she trod on, for she had always been reckoned Rex's sweetheart from the years gone by, when they played together as children:

We were all so excited over the matter that we never noticed the sharp ring of a bicycle well-nigh upon us, as a sweet, girlish voice cried gleefully: "Let me decide." And Gertie stood before us.

She looked the very picture of freshness in her white gown, as she told us merrily that she'd heard every word we'd been saying. We all crowded round her and poured out our many suggestions in a bewildering medley:

"Do please give me breathing time," she cried, disengaging herself and throwing a little appealing glance towards Rex for help. He was beside her in a moment.

Perhaps it was the thought of the old days, and the miniature cricket balls, and the real matches we had all played together since, that made her say emphatically: "It shall be a cricket match." She knew what a disappointment it meant for us, but she couldn't help it; Rex was as a king among us for sport, and she knew that he loved cricket beyond all else.

Our faces grew very long, it all seemed so tame. We loved cricket matches to distraction—but Rex's birthday—and the chance of a dance—it was too bad!

"Not even a picnic," Joan whispered to me miserably, nearly in tears.

Suddenly Gertie spoke as one inspired.

"You'll never guess, any of you," she cried gaily, "we must have something *more* than a cricket match: ("Perhaps it's the picnic," whispered Joan breathlessly.) What do you say, girls (she always called us girls in the old, familiar way, though she was the youngest amongst us), what do you say—to—to—RANJI?"

Had a thunderbolt fallen in our midst I don't think we could have been more astonished. "Ranji," in the midst of all his brilliant County engagements—it was outrageous to cherish the idea for a moment. Our spirits had been raised to fever pitch in anticipation, and had descended as quickly to the lowest depths. It was Rex who came to the rescue exactly as the right moment.

"We can but try," he said reassuringly. "Bob knows Ranji well, and if anyone is able to get him, dear old Bob will." The said Bob was a prominent member of the County Cricket Committee and Rex's sworn friend: "I'll see about it at once," resumed Rex, "and there's no reason, girls, why you shouldn't push away the tables and rip up the carpet in the evening, and have a little turn on the light fantastic—those who like it," he added.

In delightful anticipation we dispersed, but not before we saw Rex turn to Gertie with the same eager look he had in his eyes when she appeared.

"You did it for me," he said, "and what reward am I to have if Ranji comes?"

"Anything you like after the match," she responded gaily, "for," she added mischievously, "you'll never succeed in getting him."

Four days afterwards we were all sitting in long rows behind each other, watching one of the many fixtures on our picturesque County cricket ground. Suddenly a telegraph boy came racing up on his bicycle:

Rex had distinguished himself wonderfully, and had just retired to the cricketers' tent, when Gertie rushed to where we were sitting.

"It's for Rex," she said. "Whom can it be from?"

A moment later Rex came towards us, the open telegram in his hand. I shall never forget his face, joy and excitement and triumph all mingling together.

"Ranji's coming," he cried; "he's really coming." And then he read it out to us and handed it on to Gertie. It was from Bob:

"Ranji has promised to play for me," he wired, "and I'm on my way to tell you all about it."

Two hours afterwards Bob arrived on the scene and "told us all about it."

"It's a real, genuine promise," he said firmly and enthusiastically, "and I know that he will play for Rex. But you haven't heard half," he continued, with a twinkle in his eye. "I'll tell you just what happened. I got Rex's 'urgent' wire, and knowing there was an important County match in progress at the time, I flew off.

"I own my spirits drooped a little as I approached the ground; it seemed a big thing to ask, but fortunately there was no County fixture the date of Rex's match, and I soon found myself among a lot of pals, and as luck would have it Ranji among them. 'Nothing venture, nothing have,' I said to myself, so I took the bull by the horns—and ventured—risked—and WON.

"Where is it?" asked Ranji, and when I told him it wasn't far from my place he said 'All right' in his characteristic way at once.

"There's more yet," said Bob slyly. "What do you say to three other County players all coming to do their very best for Rex, and eager for the fray, also a noted amateur bowler from other parts? With these and your grand local talent you should do well."

How the news spread outside our own domain it is difficult to say. It was a little whisper at first, commencing with boys on the cricket ground. "Ranji be a-comin'," said Tom to Jack, and the same refrain passed on—Ranji's a-comin'—until all the little and big Toms and Jacks and 'Arry's in every direction took up the startling and welcome refrain: "Ranji's a-comin'." And enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Rex had been very careful in the choice of his team, the best of local talent was forthcoming, so with our splendid promised aid from afar we were all in high spirits,

although the opposing team promised to be very strong, including a few "pros."

Our hearts beat high as the momentous day approached.

* * * * *

It was Rex's birthday! We had been up for hours, and were not sure whether we were on our heads or our heels. Excitement was intense, the breakfast-table was covered with innumerable letters and presents. Joan and I had worked Rex a big handkerchief-case in dark green and gold, and had placed it in a prominent position; the boys had given him a silver cigarette-case; and father and mother a smart new four-wheeled dog-cart and piebald cob, which were to be used for the first time to meet Ranji.

Breakfast was nearly over, when Rex rushed in. He eagerly scanned the numberless packages before him, but there was nothing among them from Gertie. Then he turned to his letters. All at once his face lit up and he uttered a joyful exclamation. It was only a tiny envelope directed in a small, girlish hand—Gertie's. What that envelope contained we could only guess, for he put it unopened in his pocket and hastily left the room.

At the same moment our attention was directed to the sound of a sharp rat-tat and violent pull at the door-bell. It was a telegram from Ranji to say the hour of his train!

He was due to arrive at eleven a.m., and long before the time it was amusing to see Jenkins, our coachman, getting Rex's new turn-out ready. He had secured a brand new pair of bright scarlet rosebuds for the piebald's headpiece, and now was walking round and round the vehicle to see that not a speck of dirt was visible.

The news had reached the station, and everyone seemed to know that the famous cricketer was about to arrive. Punctually on the stroke of eleven the train came in, and as the last echo of the musical chimes from the Town Hall clock died away, a figure emerged from the station entrance—it was Ranji!

All the way from the station to our house there was excitement; everyone was on the alert, and many a one hailed Ranji with a vigorous "Good day, sir," as he drove up with Rex. Ranji graciously acknowledged the salutes, and smilingly greeted those who bade him welcome.

The competing team had come from afar, and was decidedly strong, but it was not to be wondered at that they looked a little surprised at our "battery"—Ranji with his

three compatriots—one of whom had done yeoman service in the past, long ere the Indian Prince became "one of us"; the others, two most promising recruits, who had all the grit and heart one delights in for County cricket, to say nothing of the "amateur bowler from other parts."

"You kept a fairly hot lot up your sleeve," said our opposing captain, looking a little blank.

"No 'pros,'" said Rex quickly, with a knowing look, introducing his friends: (Rather a cut at the other side, we thought.)

"Let's toss!" he added, seeing we were all excitement, fumbling in his pockets for a coin, and ferreting out innumerable other contents before the desired article, a new half crown which he always used for the purpose, came to light. The excitement of all those on the ground was intense.

"I think we'll go in," said Rex, having won the spin of the coin:

"I've never seen anything like such a crowd on the ground before," said an onlooker; "we might be at a County gathering."

Among the vast throng were *habitués* who had not been seen watching the favourite game for years, a perfect bevy of ladies in every colour and fashion—and little boys who shouted in glee: "That be Ranji!" Gertie, too, was flitting about in the daintiest of pale pink costumes and a hat covered with pink roses.

The sodden condition of the ground rendered playing on the usual perfect wicket out of the question, and a wicket had been pitched further ahead. The pitch was slow and dead, and the "pro" bowler on the other side had a broad smile on his countenance, feeling confident he could make the ball "turn" a lot, the moment the wind and sun had done away with the "cutting through."

At this moment Rex was walking past us all with Ranji, the great cricketer looking amiability itself.

"Just where you like," he replied to Rex's query as to where he would like to go in: "No. 4 for the County; say No. 4 now." So this point, so important to all of us onlookers, was settled, and we had to wait a bit in expectation:

Rex sent in two of the younger members of his "battery," and a right good start they made, though the ball wouldn't travel on the sodden turf. Some forty runs were notched, ere Ranji, with his peculiar, easy grace, wended his way to the wicket amidst the plaudits of the throng, we girls all along the row clapping until our hands ached:

Excitement grew intense, and it was almost possible to hear a pin drop. Every movement Ranji made in taking his block was carefully watched, and with that grace and agility so peculiarly his own he had added some twenty runs to our score when the treacherous ground caused a ball to rise quickly and glance into slip's hands, thus bringing his career to a sudden close.

I don't know which of us felt it most, but we quickly subdued our feelings and cheered our hero to the echo as he passed towards the cricketers' tent:

During the morning Rex had crossed over to us on every conceivable occasion, but Gertie was always surrounded, and it was rather unfortunate that, at the moment of our sorrow, he had just managed to find a seat beside her and the next had to jump up:

"Bad look-out for us," he muttered, as he stalked away, "if Ranji with his eye and power of timing finds the wicket tricky." Here he stopped, as he saw a nervous expression pass over the countenance of the in-going batsman:

"Never mind, don't be downhearted," he said, changing his tone; but, alas, a deadly spot had been found, and with nine wickets down for under a hundred, a bell announced that the luncheon interval had arrived.

"One wicket more to fall—four runs more to reach the century." Such was Rex's comment as he donned his blazer:

Luncheon over, punctually to the moment the vibrating bell called our remaining batsman to the wicket. Our hopes of reaching a century soon expired; the eleventh man, maybe anxious to have it recorded that his efforts had secured the coveted century, made a vigorous pull, skied the ball, and was instantly caught in the long field:

The spirits of the other team ran high; a happy vein of latent hope and expectation flitted over the countenances of all:

"What bowling have they got?" demanded their captain of one of his team:

"There is one thing, we shall have no 'pros' against us," said another: "Yes, the heavy roller," calls out the captain to an inquiry from the ground man, "and squeeze the wet up well."

"Which end, Ranji?" said Rex, as they walked together towards the wickets:

"I don't care," was his reply.

"Well, you two settle," rejoined Rex, addressing at the same time his other bowler, the "noted amateur from other parts."

Eventually Ranji arranged to start from

the top end, from which the "pro" had managed to make such havoc with us. We were all on the *qui vive*!

"I love bowling," said Ranji, with pleasure, "and this is just my wicket."

The opposing captain, a truly hard hitter, took with him to the wicket a promising young bat, fresh from the Eton eleven. Runs mounted apace—the wicket was easy from the effects of the roller. Rex cast his eye towards the telegraph, but said nothing. He had the greatest faith in his bowlers, and the sun was scorching hot.

Ranji, when the other man was bowling, was simply ubiquitous—"short leg," "silly point," in every conceivable position near the wicket, anxious only for his exertions and marvelous keenness to make a catch for his co-bowler. The spot was found! The sun and wind had done their work; wicket after wicket fell before the deadly aim of our bowlers, and the whole side was out for some twenty runs less than our total!

"Well bowled, you chaps!" cried Rex, rushing up. "Bravo, Ranji!" clapping him on the back—"seven wickets for well under thirty, I'm certain." And so it proved.

Our side went in again, and Ranji begged to go in late. We were all vociferous to the contrary, and father begged Rex to put our hero of the day in early.

"All right," said Ranji good-naturedly; "when you like."

"Next," said Rex promptly, desirous of pleasing everyone, and again Ranji donned his pads.

This time the eager crowd and all of us were given a truly sumptuous feast. Ranji was in his best vein, and wielded the bat in a way all his own, doing whatever he liked with the bowling; and ever and anon a burst of cheering rose high whenever he gave startling proofs of his skill; it was a delightful exhibition.

After playing himself carefully in at first, and getting the pace of the wicket, his timing was perfection, and with that extraordinary twist of the wrist a ball that any other batsman would be glad enough to smother was sent speeding to leg boundary.

In all directions the ball traveled, frequently for fours—crisp cuts—lovely off-drives all along the carpet, stupendous on-drives—each manipulated without the least exertion, twos and fours coming with such freedom, that at last the ball landed in close proximity to all of us and the ladies' tent with terrific force.

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"Duck," cried an impetuous youth, without a thought, in his bewilderment, but there was no occasion: A gentleman of maturer years leapt up, dexterously seized the ball, and jerked it to the approaching fieldsman:

"Brings me back to my Oxford days," he muttered, with a scathing look at the nervous youth.

Ranji was soon joined by another comrade in arms of many a County fight, and another brilliant stand was made:

"Wasn't it best to have a cricket match?" whispered Gertie over my shoulder breathlessly.

"A magnificent performance," agreed one and all unanimously, and when the Indian Prince came out after the finest innings imaginable, applause such as is seldom heard greeted him and followed him until he disappeared within the precincts of the cricketers' tent. The match ended in a grand victory for our side:

Ranji, before he left, came and walked through the rose garden with us girls, and was enthusiastic over Joan's "teas." Snap, our terrier, took a great fancy to him, and even Polly, the cockatoo, gave him a gracious welcome and sorrowful adieu—and Polly hates strangers as a rule.

When Rex returned from taking Ranji to the station, we sat down to dinner, to which Rex had invited all his pals, and we likewise had secured a keen bevy of girls.

Dinner over, the tables were cleared away, the carpet having mysteriously taken flight long before, and soon we were all slipping about on the shiny boards. Delightful strains of music came in from the conservatory, mother having secured an energetic pianist and two or three lively fiddles for the occasion:

We were half through the first valse when Gertie came down, a vision of snowy white, with real white roses, Rex's gift, entwined in her sunny hair and on her gown:

Rex was waiting for her—she had never looked so radiant, and a blush suffused her fair face as his arm circled her and they valed in perfect time to the deep, stirring strains of *The Choristers*:

As the last note ended, we saw him draw her arm within his own and lead her away: When they returned later the music was softly rising and falling, and Rex brought her proudly to us all, and told us how they had plighted their troth in the gloaming for "ever and aye."

Tales of My Clients.

✻ ✻ By A LADY PHOTOGRAPHER.

Edited by GERTIE DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES.

Beatrice Hannel, an officer's daughter, opens an art-photographic studio in Kensington as a means of adding to her slender income. She here tells some of the most fascinating romances in which, through her clients, she has been concerned. Each story is complete in itself.

III.—The Ruse of a Flirt.

A MARRIAGE has been arranged and will shortly take place between Miss Klara Kellett—daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Augustus Kellett, of 52 Drinkon Square—and Sir John Prynceby, the well-known millionaire and philanthropist, who was among the recipients of recent birthday honours.

I read the above announcement with considerable interest, and then handed the highly-glazed threepenny weekly over to my receptionist.

"She's a clever girl, isn't she?" I remarked, infusing a lilt of sarcasm into my voice.

Miss Thorne perused the paragraph and then looked vacant.

"Er—who is she?" was her reply, as she laid down the paper.

"Oh, you *must* remember—a dashing, red-haired girl who had her portrait taken about six months ago with that objectionable Captain Ghilk?"

Still my receptionist retained her expression of non-comprehension.

"My *dear* Miss Thorne, either your memory is failing or you are in love! Come down into the storing room and let me refresh your recollection," I said—just a little irritably, I'm afraid—as I glanced in the sitters' book to find the number of the plate.

Then we went down, and a few moments later I had looked for No. 0181, and found it.

"Now you remember, don't you?" I said, holding the negative sideways.

Miss Thorne peered until at last she made out the figures of a white-gowned woman and a frock-coated man, taken in one of the most affectionate of the conventional poses adopted by Royal lovers—that is to say, she was sitting in a high-backed chair while he stood at her side resting one hand on her shoulder.

"Oh, of course! Now I *do* recollect. I remember thinking how very indecorous it was for them to be taken in such a very—ahem!—intimate attitude, when they were not engaged!"

"They were practically engaged, I believe, and Captain Ghilk induced Klara to have the portrait taken in order to win a wager. I know it was his affair, because he arranged the whole business and paid for the pictures when they were finished. It was a very silly thing to do, but as Klara Kellett is a flirt who acts on impulse (such a dangerous combination) she is always doing silly things."

So saying, I replaced the negative and returned to the studio, while Miss Thorne attended to the pictorial wants of a Society mother who required a second impression of a photograph in which she had been taken surrounded by her seven children and five dogs.

Then my thoughts strayed away from the red-haired flirt of Drinkon Square, only to be brought back again more quickly than I had anticipated.

I was just thinking out the details of a study picture which I was preparing for an exhibition, when there was a knock at the studio door.

"Come in!"

A footman (one whom I disliked, and who was leaving my service in a fortnight) entered the room carrying a card on a silver salver.

I took the card and felt a thrill of astonishment as I read the name inscribed thereon—"Miss Klara Kellett."

"Show Miss Kellett into the waiting-room, and say I will be with her at once," I said, wondering if my former client had come to be photographed with her birthday-honoured millionaire.

"Very good, madam!"

But when I got down it was to find the frivolous Klara in the *reception-room*, chatting to a lady clerk, who was ticking entries in the sitters' book.

"How do you do, Miss Hannel? I hate waiting-rooms—they always seem so dentist-y, and specialist-y!—so I *insisted* upon stopping here among all these lovely photographs," she began.

What an absolutely bewitching young person she was! Not strictly beautiful, but a human artistic treat, nevertheless, with her gorgeous red hair, cream and pink skin, too-strongly-marked dark brows, daring grey eyes, and well-developed figure.

"And what lovely pictures you've got! It *does* seem a shame that a photographic artist can't be 'hung' on a 'line,' like the brush-and-paint people!" she continued, while I modestly listened to this encouraging but very insincere admiration.

At last, when preliminaries were over, I ventured to offer some suitably subdued congratulations.

"Yes, it's an awfully good match, isn't it?" she replied frankly. "And he's such a *dear* thing—not a bit bald or horrid like the millionaire-bart. has every right to be! I'm awfully in love with him, and he's awfully in love with me, so we are going to be the happiest people in London, and give lots of parties (you *will* come, *won't* you?) and heaps of money to charities and things. I *have* been rather what people who don't understand things call a 'flirt,' but that's over now, and I'm going to settle down beautifully, and to forget that I've ever even *smiled* at any man except my own husband: Nice, isn't it?"

I agreed it was very nice, and then gently steered round an insinuation likely to bring Miss Kellett to a statement of her business.

"Well, I've come to ask if you remember a—*a* portrait I—I had—er—er—had taken with Captain Ghilk?" she said, twisting up the end of her long white-fox stole.

"Of course I remember it quite well, Miss Kellett. In fact, to be absolutely candid, I must confess that when I read the announcement of your engagement about half-an-hour ago, a sort of feeling of reminiscent curiosity made me go down into my storing-room below and look at the negative," I replied.

Instantly Klara Kellett's face lighted up; then coming closer, and laying one hand on my arm, she spoke once more with her customary fluency:

"And it's about that negative I've come to see you, Miss Hannel—that negative which may spoil my *whole* life."

"What—er—how do you mean?"

"I mean that I believe Captain Ghilk, who is simply writhing with vengeance, will order some more copies to be printed (thank goodness, I know there are none of the original ones remaining) with a view to showing them to Sir John Prynceby!"

"But that would not be so very serious, surely?"

"*Serious?* Why, it would be *blighting*! Sir John's mother was a Quakeress, so you can guess *his* notions as to feminine decorum. And if he knew I had—er—had ever been specially friendly with a man of Captain Ghilk's reputation, why, he'd give me up *at once*. Fortunately, no letters are existing that have ever been exchanged between us, so this photograph is the only proof that I was ever misguided enough to half promise to be engaged to him. And I've come to ask you to give me the negative, Miss Hannel."

I paused a moment before I replied. This last sentence savoured too much of certainty that her commands would be obeyed to please an independent photographic artist.

"This is rather a difficult request to grant, Miss Kellett," I said at last.

"Why difficult? You told me you had got the negative downstairs—I know the number on the portrait is 0181—so where is the difficulty?"

"The difficulty lies with me and my sense of professional fitness: You see the negative belongs to Captain Ghilk, as it was *he* who ordered, received, and paid for the photographs—therefore I have no right to part with his property, and—"

In an instant Klara had interrupted me with one of those bursts of sudden, impulsive temper that had made more than one man hesitate to ask for the possession of Colonel Kellett's attractive daughter.

"You have a right to do it, or anyhow you *could* do it if you wanted to," she flared. "It's just a piece of nasty spite that makes you refuse—nothing else—and let me tell you, Miss Hannel, that it won't do any good to your professional reputation for you to be so disobliging. It's abominable!"

And with this last word she actually stamped her daintily-shod foot:

This, of course, decided me: *Nothing* now would make me grant her request!

Although it would have been a culpably irregular thing to do, there is just a chance that I might have arranged something if she had pleaded gently and prettily—but this insolent display of fury quite settled matters the other way.

"I regret that I cannot oblige you," was my only reply, as with a stately bend of my head I parted the plush curtains, passed through the green waiting-room, and entered the studio—leaving Miss Kellett to finish wreaking her anger on the lady clerk and the footman.

For the next couple of hours I was kept busy with a ducal baby who *would* persist in thrusting a woolly lamb into his ducal mouth, just at the precise moment the camera was about to immortalise his unclassified little features. His future Grace was very tiring, and by the time he had been carried away, weeping lustily, I felt desperately fatigued.

"I've a good mind not to see anyone else to-day," I remarked to myself, just as Miss Thorne entered the room with the announcement that Miss Kellett and her friend Miss Nora Dunkerly were in the waiting-room, and begged to see me.

"Miss Kellett implores you to speak to her just for a moment—she seems very urgent about it, and is terribly upset," pleaded my receptionist, when I refused to grant the interview.

I hesitated, then my heart softened.

"Miss Kellett has been very rude, but still I'll come down just for a minute to see what she wants," I replied. "Only for a minute, say, please, Miss Thorne."

After an interval sufficient to appease my own dignity, I descended, and there found a picture of beautiful penitence.

"Oh, Miss Hannel, can you ever, ever forgive me?" cried Klara, in a passion of remorse. "I told my great friend—Miss Dunkerly—how vilely rude I had been, and she said the only thing I could do was to come round and apologise. So we've come together, as I was really *afraid* to see you alone. I *do* beg your pardon, and can offer as my only excuse the fact that papa has a vile temper, and that I am a victim of hereditary instinct, I am—oh! I *am* so sorry!"

Immediately all my resentment faded—how could it remain in the face of such an abject apology?—and then the future Lady Prynceby and I shook hands with extreme cordiality to show that the matter was quite forgotten.

"I *can't* thank you enough," she began again, when suddenly her sentence was broken by a thud sounding at the further end of the room.

We looked round and discovered that Miss Dunkerly had fallen fainting across one of the plush-covered lounges, holding in her hand the cabinet portrait of an M.P.

In an instant we had both rushed towards her, and before three minutes had elapsed, myself, Miss Thorne, and the lady clerks were busy with fans, smelling salts, brandy, burnt feathers, and various other remedies that didn't do a bit of good.

It was an obstinate fainting-fit, and I really began to grow alarmed.

"I'm going for a doctor," cried Klara, when we had cremated the contents of a whole pillow—"no, no, I'd rather go myself, because there's a special doctor quite near who knows papa." And before I could utter another word she had dashed through the plush curtains and left us all in charge of her prostrate friend.

But no sooner had Miss Kellett departed than Miss Dunkerly commenced to show signs of consciousness. Her lips quivered, her eyelids flickered, her breast heaved convulsively—and before we had fully realised that all cause for anxiety was over, a condition of violent, screaming hysterics had taken the place of her former inertia.

"Ah—h—h—oh!—h—h—Ow—ow—ow—ow—" she screamed and howled, while we sprayed the *eau de Cologne* and applied the smelling salts with renewed vigour.

For nearly ten minutes this continued, till Klara returned with the news that she couldn't find a doctor at home.

But the very word "doctor"—as is so often the case with emotional and hysterical patients—worked like magic; for from that instant Miss Dunkerly slowly began to recover, till at last she was able to explain the cause of her attack.

"I—I have been very foolish, b—but the sight of his face after all these weary years upset me dreadfully," she panted, indicating the photograph of the whiskered M.P.

"You mean Mr. Gosworth?" I cried in astonishment. He seemed such a staid and much-married person to cause this outburst.

"Gosworth! Delamere, you mean! Surely that is the portrait of Gordon Delamere?"

"Indeed it is *not*. That is Mr. Charles Gosworth, the member for Dunstead."

Eagerly Miss Dunkerly once more scanned the photographed features, then with an air of contrition she turned towards us.

"I see my mistake—the nose is *quite* different at the end—but really at first I—I thought it was th—th—the one man I can never forget! Pray, Miss Hannel, forgive me for giving so much trouble and being so absurd!"

I had been doing a good deal of forgiving that afternoon, so a little extra wouldn't matter; therefore I made some soothingly amiable rejoinder, after which we all uttered a few more mutually polite remarks and parted.

And I really wasn't sorry to get these two particularly disturbing young women out of the way. What with insults, ducal babies, apologies, faints and hysteria, I had gone through a trying time.

The next morning, before I had quite completed my toilette, Miss Thorne came to me. "Oh, Miss Hannel, what *shall* we do?" she said. "Captain Ghilk has just called to order half-a-dozen impressions of that portrait he had taken six months ago with Miss Kellett, and now—*look here!*"

And with these last words she held up the *shattered fragments of a negative*.

"What does this mean? How was it broken?"

"Why, I went downstairs to look for No. 0181, and found the shelves and whole place in dreadful disorder, and *this* lying broken on the ground! I *do* wish you would come down!"

I hurried down at once to the storing-room, where everything was as my receptionist stated.

There was one item, however, she *hadn't* noticed—and that was a tiny, perfumed,

lace-trimmed handkerchief lying on the floor, a *handkerchief* marked "*Klara*"!

Then I understood everything—Miss Kellett's return to apologise, her friend-confederate's illness, and her supposed visit to the doctor.

Evidently she must have concocted the plot directly I refused to give up the negative.

The puzzle-pieces fitted exactly. She must have explained the situation to her "dearest friend," who agreed to faint and have hysterics in order to get everyone's attention centred on *her* while Klara—gone on a supposed visit to the doctor—slipped downstairs, found negative No. 0181, and broke it.

Doubtless the lady clerk unwittingly supplied information as to the arrangement of the stored negatives, and possibly the footman (on receipt of a liberal tip) assisted in the scheme.

Of course he said he didn't, but, then, footmen, particularly dismissed footmen, are not *always* to be relied upon!

Candidly speaking, I was not sorry that the Captain was prevented from playing his trick of vengeance; and when Lady Prynceby walked down the aisle leaning on her handsome husband's arm, throwing me a sweet smile *en route* (I was a specially invited guest), I felt nearly pleased that the Drinkon Square flirt had behaved in such a sinfully artful manner. It *was* clever, there's no doubt—and we must be clever when we are trying to guard so precious a thing as our own happiness! But there! here are my absurd romances getting the better of me as usual!

Klara Prynceby had been very wrong, and there was no excuse for her—of course not—er—er—

(Next Month: "*A Plot and a Pendant.*")

MY KINGDOM.

BY SHEILA BRAINE.

*My state is low, but yet, one day,
 I shall be;
 For somewhere on the world's highway
 My true love waits for me.
 She will not wear a crown of gold,
 But there a Queen she'll stand,
 And fair the kingdom she will hold
 Within her gentle hand.*

*Oh, when my Queen doth stoop to me
 To lay that hand in mine,
 I shall be clothed with sov'reignty,
 By sweetest right divine;
 And when the perfect trust I gain
 Of her whom I adore,
 In Love's dear kingdom I shall reign
 A King for evermore.*

STORIES IN VERSE.

Readers who are on the look-out for new recitations will do well to give the pieces in this feature more than a passing glance. They are very suitable for reciting. Application for permission to make use of any of them in public must be made to the Editor, *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The Lay of an Ancient Suit.

* * * * * By T. M. GREEN.

Ben Davies was a farming man, and Bessie
was his wife,
A frugal, honest, loving pair, they led a
happy life.

Right cheerily they battled through all sorts
of luck and weather,
And found that pluck and patience win, if
people pull together.

Now though this worthy couple were in most
things well agreed,
One little question now and then would
controversy breed.
Contention springs from little things, the
matter in dispute
Arose from Ben's affection for a certain
ancient suit.

Wife Bessie had a proper pride, and thought
it right and meet
That folks, according to their means, should
be well dressed and neat.

On Sunday, when she went to church, on
market-day to town,
No matron looked more ladylike, nor wore a
better gown.

But Farmer Ben had other views, he thought
it wasteful sin,
While old clothes hung together well, on new
to spend his tin.

Week in, week out, at work or play, one
ancient suit he wore,
So patched and darned that Bess declared
she'd cobble it no more.

One market morning Ben would go, to sell
some sheep and corn,
And brought his coat to Bessie—for the sleeve
was badly torn—

"Just patch this elbow, will you, dear, and
darn my trouser knee,
And stitch some buttons on my vest."
"No, Ben, I won't," said she.

"Why don't you get some decent clothes?
How can you go about
In rags and tatters all arrayed, just like a
tramping lout?
Long years ago that seedy suit was done for,
past repair;
I've said 'I'll mend 'em up no more,' in
fact, I can't, so there."

But Ben replied: "I like old clothes; I'll
wear 'em if I please,
Why should I go for new ones, and thus
sacrifice my ease?"
"Your ease, indeed! Your cash, you mean!
Do talk a little sense;
Why, people call you Miser Ben, and say
you hoard your pence."

Then Benjamin his temper lost, as he had
done before,
And putting on his ragged coat, went out
and banged the door.
He muttered to himself this vow: "In spite
of all they say,
I'll wear 'em till the wind or waves shall
bear 'em all away."

He went and sold his sheep and corn, and
then began to find
That rising prices might produce a better
state of mind.
And then he thought his faithful wife had
reason on her side,
Since men of substance ought to have a decent
sort of pride.

In passing down the market street, a clothing shop he spied;
He paused before it, lost in thought, then suddenly he cried:

"I'll do it; aye, by Jove, I will; 'twill be a grand surprise,
Law! bless the pigs! how Bess will stare! she won't believe her eyes."

So in he went and bought two suits, selected with much care,
Stout tweed and cord for working days, fine cloth for Sunday wear.

He saw the shopman pack them up, with string and paper brown—
"Now send 'em to my trap," he said. "You'll find it at The Crown."

Then market dinner, pipe and grog, and thinking of his plan,
Combined to make good Farmer Ben another sort of man.
And as the night began to fall he took his homeward way,
Brim full of fun and jollity. He'd spent a pleasant day.

Midway between his farm and town, about a mile or more,
The turnpike road ran close beside and overhung the shore.
And here, when Benjamin arrived, he shouted loud in glee:
"Now for it! Here I'll keep my vow, and send 'em off to sea."

He quickly doffed his ancient togs and cast them one by one
Unto the winds, they flutter'd forth, a moment, and were gone.
And then beneath his seat he sought that parcel done in brown.
It wasn't there! "By Jove!" he cried,
"I've left it at The Crown."

* * * * *

A little later Bessie stood and looked into the night—
"I wonder where he is?" she said, then screamed aloud in fright,
As crossing o'er the yard she saw a figure strange array'd
In underclothing, hat, and boots—well might she be dismayed.

"Oh, don't you know me?" said a voice.
"It's Ben!" she cried, and flew
To meet him. "Ben, my dear," she said,
"who could have thought 'twas you?"

Good gracious! boy, what have you done, to come in such attire?
You're blue with cold, come tell me all before the kitchen fire."

Before a rousing kitchen fire poor Ben explained his plight,
He told of "happy thought" and plan which had not worked out right.
"I meant to give thee, Bessie lass, a glad and big surprise."
Said she: "You did surprise me, Ben, to come in such disguise."

Next morning Bess was up betimes, and left her spouse in bed,
She called to Will, her serving man, and this to him she said:
"Be quick, my lad, put in the mare, and drive away to town,
"The master's lost a parcel, and he thinks it's at The Crown."

Ten minutes later William stood within the kitchen door,
An oilcan and a parcel brown in his two hands he bore.
And said: "Is this the parcel, mum, wot master could not find?
'Twas in the cart, mum, reet enuff, tied to the rail behind."

The hostler was a careful man, and lest the clothes should spoil,
Had tied them to the tail-board rail, to keep them from the oil,
And thus the "happy thought" had failed to work out straight and right,
But caused poor Ben a shocking cold, and Bess a shocking fright.

Henceforth he tried another plan to treat the question dress,
'Twas very simple, only this—he left it all to Bess.
He found a lover's golden rule, applied to clothing, fail,
Though slightly altered, it may serve as moral to my tale.

Thus—
"'Tis good to be merry and wise,
'Tis good to be honest and true.
But bad 'to be off with the old' suit
Before you are on with the new."

A Perfect Cure. * * * *

* * * * By FRED EDMONDS.

Now, Solomon Joseph Zerubbabel Jones
Was little but skin and a parcel of bones ;
His ailments were many, from *tic-douloureux*
To gout, which refused to submit to a shoe.

He had indigestion, and chronic catarrh,
And corns (which annoy you wherever you
are);
His liver complaint would allow him no
rest,
And a cough like an incubus sat on his
chest.

The doctors, it seems, could afford no relief,
To Solomon Joe's inexpressible grief.
Some advertised stuff he determined to try ;
And if it should kill him—why, then he would
die !

'Twas all very well, but which one should he
choose
Of so many magical nostrums ? For whose
Could claim the priority, since it was sure
That every one proved an infallible cure ?

"Blue pills for blue people" he saw side by
side
With "Old Mother Wiggins' Syrup"; the
pride
Of ailing humanity kept on the march
By "Elkiboy's curative essence of starch."

He brooded awhile, but the light came at last,
His moment of doubt was a thing of the past.
Quoth Solomon Joseph : "I care not a jot—
I'll end the dilemma by taking the lot !"

He searched the advertisement columns with
care,
And ordered a sample of everything there
That savoured of medicine ; thus he acquired
Quite twenty or thirty of what he desired.

Selecting a big silver goblet or cup,
He carefully mized all the remedies up ;
Then paused for awhile, made the queerest of
mugs,
And swallowed these incomprehensible
drugs. . . ;

300

Oh, blissful condition ! Oh, rapture and
joy !
He felt as he never had felt since a boy.
The blood, dancing merrily, coursed through
his veins,
Forever had vanished his aches and his
pains.

"That wearisome feeling" had gone like a
shot,
For something or other, by "touching the
spot,"
Had banished his backache and straightened
his spine,
And led him, in spite of his liver, to dine.

In spite of his liver ? Nay, that was the
joke !
His liver with all other organs awoke.
He worked like a nigger. His vigour was
such
That pure electricity flowed from his touch:

Now, what brought about this remarkable
change ?
Just think for a moment, 'twill hardly seem
strange.
Each cure was perfection, each cure was
unique.
He got the result thirty-fold, so to speak.

With gratitude glowing, he could not do less
Than send to each maker his name and
address ;
A photo, on which the inquirer might gaze ;
A letter of thanks, overflowing with praise.

That photo was published by each of the
firms ;
The letter, too, couched in superlative terms:
This grand testimonial brooked no delay—
They all brought it out on the very same
day !

* * * *

In a far-distant Colony, over the main,
Lives a man just like Jones, very slightly
insane ;
But they tell you his name, if you ask in the
town,
Is Archibald Roger Theophilus Brown.

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The Devotion of Fenny.

* * * * * By YATE TREGARRON.

The tragedy of a plucky little maid-of-all-work.

THE Protheros were a happy-go-lucky young couple, who had married on a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and their love for each other.

They lived in a magnified doll's-house—one of a row of similar dolls'-houses, in a street that was not finished, and which was ankle deep in dust in Summer and ankle deep in mud in Winter.

Young Prothero, while admitting these deficiencies on the part of the road to visitors, who were apt to wax sarcastic about it, became cheerful on the subject of his small dwelling-house.

"When you *do* reach it," he would say, "it's so jolly and so compact."

"Compact" was a good word—a very good word. The house *was* compact. It was also small, so small that the welcoming host when opening the door was wont to stand aside when the visitor stepped in, so that there should be room in the "hall" for both. In the dining-room, it was pointed out by the proud young husband that it was most convenient to have the sideboard so close to the table, things could be reached so easily, and, as they kept no servant, this was certainly to be considered an advantage.

As to the drawing-room, even young Prothero was bound to admit that it was very small, too small to put much furniture into it, "and that," young Prothero would say with his beaming smile, "is just as well, as we haven't got much, eh, dearie?"

And his dearie would smile and agree, and whether the guests admired the house or not they were bound to admire the state of wedded bliss in which the young Protheros lived, and several of young Prothero's friends rushed wildly into matrimony on infinitesimal incomes in consequence, and many of Mrs. Prothero's friends pined in

secret for a husband like young Prothero and a doll's-house of their own.

In time it became necessary, in view of an approaching event, for the Protheros to keep a servant, and, as a first-class domestic was not to be thought of, a "young girl" was looked out for to assist the wife in her domestic duties, and thus they chanced upon Jenny.

Jenny was a tall, thin slip of a girl, with a hungry face. Her frocks were all too short, her bushy fringe all too long, and her fingers were all thumbs, as Mrs. Prothero despairingly said.

Jenny was very willing and dreadfully anxious to learn; but, oh, so clumsy! If she had not been so cheap, and so very willing, she would certainly have had to go, for her breakages were enough to upset the strongest of nerves. On her side, Jenny declared tearfully to herself that if it hadn't been for "Master," she would never have stood it.

She was doing her best, her very best; but her mistress, whose temper at this time was a little variable, was "that snappy," as Jenny expressed it, that relations between them were severely strained.

One day young Mrs. Prothero heard from her couch in the dining-room a tremendous smash in the kitchen, and hurrying in found Jenny weeping in the middle of a mass of broken crockery, enough to drive a house-proud young woman like Mrs. Prothero mad.

"Oh, Jenny—Jenny," said young Mrs. Prothero in heartfelt tones, "you will really have to go! You will, indeed. My best tea-things too! Did ever anyone see such a smash?" And she fell to weeping as she surveyed the scene.

"I didn't go for to do it," wailed Jenny, with her apron over her head. "They slipped out of my hands, and—"

"You were trying to carry too much, you naughty girl," scolded the severe young housekeeper. "Haven't I told you, times and times, not to do it?"

"I was hurrying, ma'am," confessed Jenny, "the master's tea wasn't ready, and he'll be in soon, and I thought I'd get some of them gooseberries out of the garden. He liked them the other night, and—and——"

Here she broke down again, weeping dismally, and her mistress joined her. Into the midst of this scene of desolation young Prothero, whose latch-key had been unheard in the door, stepped with his cheerful smile.

"What's the matter?" he inquired. "My dear girl," to his wife, whom he embraced affectionately, "don't cry like that! What is it? Jenny had another smash, eh? Well, well, don't cry about it! Best china, eh? Well, we'll save up and buy some more, won't we, Jenny? Gather up the bits and throw them away, there's a good girl. I don't think there is much damage done after all. Now, dearie, you come and lie down, and try to forget it, and, Jenny, you put the wretched things away out of sight."

He bore off his already comforted wife, and Jenny looked after them with sorrowful eyes.

Young Prothero settled his wife on the couch, cheered her up with his gay laugh and tender talk, and then went back to the kitchen where Jenny, red-eyed, was gathering up the broken pieces of the tea-set in her apron.

"Well, Jenny," he said gaily, his blue eyes dancing. "What's the damage, eh?"

"Not so much, sir," the girl said earnestly, lifting her tear-stained face. "Only three cups and five saucers, sir, and if you and the missus will stop it out of my wages——"

"No, no," he said, shaking his head kindly, as he looked down on the despondent figure. "But be more careful, Jenny, and don't vex the mistress. Go slower, there's a good girl. Then we shall get on better."

He nodded to her gaily as he went away, and Jenny looked after him with a lightened heart, and set herself to get the tea.

"He's that good," she muttered chokingly. "I will try hard not to drop nothing else!"

From that day Jenny quickly improved in her service, and her master did not hesitate to praise her when she grew deft and quick.

"It doesn't do to praise servants too

much," said the wise young wife; but her husband only laughed as he said:

"Oh, it doesn't matter—from me; and I want her to stay, you know. We don't want to be looking for another girl, just now."

So, in his careless, light-hearted way, he praised Jenny often, and she, too young to understand his nature, or to see that it meant so little, treasured up the praise, and set him up in a little niche of his own in her soft heart.

And then there came a terrible night when Jenny crouched on the stairs and listened with a sick heart to all the movements within her mistress' room, and no less intently to the tramp, tramp, tramp of young Prothero's feet below, as, half-mad with fear and grief, he walked the room all through those long hours.

It was nearly morning when he was admitted to the room—to say good-bye! There was nothing to be done, and she lay breathing her life away. Hand-in-hand they clung together till the last, and her last look was for him, and her slow, faint whisper: "We have been so happy—don't forget me!"

In a man of young Prothero's temperament grief was certain to be wild and rebellious. The doctor assisted him through the sad time that followed, and Jenny managed the house; but, the funeral being over, the young man sank into apathy and declared he did not care what became of him. He passed hours alone, and could not be persuaded to eat or drink. But he was bound to provide an answer to the pressing question—what was to be done with the baby and the house?

Young Prothero thought over these things wearily at night, and held his aching head as he reckoned up how much the illness of his wife had cost him. He could not afford a housekeeper, and he had no relations who could come to his help. His wife had run away from home to marry him, and her relations had cast her off for ever.

"I shall be ruined," he muttered dully, as he pushed the pile of bills away from him. "What can I do?"

There was a knock at the door, and Jenny came in, her hands folded in her apron, her face shining from the effects of recently-applied soap.

"What is it, Jenny?" the young master asked languidly.

"Please, sir," Jenny began breathlessly,

"is it true what nurse says—that I am to go, and that you are going to have a woman to take care of baby?"

"What else can I do, Jenny?" the young man asked wearily. "I can hardly afford it; but the child must be looked after."

The last words came harshly, for he resented the necessity of spending money on the child who had cost his mother's life.

"If you'd trust me, sir—and I'm very 'andy now—I think I could manage," the girl said eagerly. "I minded our baby, months and months, I did, before mother died, and he wasn't more than a fortnight old when I started. I understand all about the bottles, sir, and nurse has told me what he's to have. No one could love him as much as me, sir," pleaded Jenny, with tears in her eyes, "and if you'd try me——"

"What, all alone, Jenny?" asked young Prothero, with a look of dull wonder on his tired face. "Could you manage?"

"I think I could, sir, if—if you'd try me and bear with me a bit. I've learnt a lot since I come here, and—I know—her—ways, sir."

"Yes, yes, you do," he muttered brokenly; "you shall stay, Jenny."

He almost felt as if he were conferring a favour with the girl's eager face before him, and it was the easiest way out of his difficulty, and he took it. It was nobody's business to interfere, and so Jenny, herself so young, was saddled with the care of a baby and a house to manage, a task that a grown woman would have found hard.

Her master was too young and too inexperienced, and perhaps too thoughtless, to understand what it meant to the girl to have the sole charge, night and day, of a fretful baby, for the child was weakly from the first.

He slept well himself every night, and never guessed what weariness Jenny lived through in the day, after a night spent in tending a crying baby. He took very little notice of the child except to frown if he heard it cry; and Jenny, quick to see what annoyed him, kept the little one out of his way.

As time went on, and the first wild violence of his grief abated, young Prothero took to going out more and more in the evenings, and night after night Jenny sat alone in the house crooning lullabies to her charge. She had had no holiday since the death of her mistress, and her master had never thought of offering one. She never

went out without the baby, and she did her shopping when she wheeled him out in his carriage.

She tried to be careful with the money that her master doled out for housekeeping; but she was young and inexperienced, and sometimes she could not resist a pretty toy, or some little article of dress for the baby—the baby whom nobody seemed to want, and who often looked shabby and a little lonely among those other happy babies who were wheeled out by proud young mothers—and then she would make up the amount from her own scanty stores, for young Prothero always frowned when she asked him for money for the baby, and she did not like him to frown.

Again, she could not resist buying little delicacies that he liked, and then she would go without her own dinner to make up, amply repaid if he said what a good little cook she was, and how well she managed.

It was a hard life for so young a girl, but Jenny struggled on bravely till, when the baby was fifteen months old, he sickened and became very ill, and his anxious nurse was fain to mention the matter to his father.

"He's very bad, sir," she said earnestly, "we must have the doctor."

"Just as you think best, Jenny," young Prothero said, looking at her with his kindly smile, the smile that meant so little. "Where is he? I'll look at him."

He was about to go out for the evening, but he put down his hat and followed Jenny to the room which she shared with the child.

The baby lay on the bed, his breath coming and going fitfully, his little cheeks as red as poppies.

The father gently touched the child's brow, and started when he felt how hot it was. The child started too, and, opening his eyes, began to cry at the sight of the strange face.

Jenny pushed the young man aside and stooped over the baby.

"You mustn't think he's cross, sir," she said anxiously. "He don't know you, you see. There, my pretty!"

She took him up in her arms, crooning to him softly and tenderly, looking up to say anxiously:

"You see he's ill, sir. Will you fetch the doctor?"

"Yes, I'll call," he said, and then looking at the two, he added slowly, "he seems fond of you."

"Well, I've always done for him," Jenny said apologetically, and then young

Prothero went from the room and called on the doctor on his way to an evening party; but the doctor was a busy man, and he only arrived at the house as young Prothero returned.

So the two men came together into the room where Jenny was walking the floor with the child. She looked worn with fatigue. There were big shadows under her eyes, and the doctor's keen eyes saw that it was difficult for her to keep up that slow, steady walk.

"You are nursing him?" he asked, as his gentle, skilful fingers touched the tiny pulse.

"I've took care of him all along," said Jenny simply.

"Have you? There has been no nurse?"

"I've been his nurse," the girl said, smiling wanly.

"Astonishing," the doctor said, his grave eyes on the girl's face.

Young Prothero put in his kindly, careless word for the girl.

"Jenny has been a great help to me," he said, with his sunny smile at the devoted young nurse. "She has done the work and looked after the baby as well. She is a capital little woman."

The doctor looked from the debonair young man, with his sunny smile and his evening dress, to the pale girl who held the little flushed child against her lean breast, and said again: "Astonishing!"

But Jenny had flushed up to her hair under her master's words of praise—perhaps the sweetest words she had ever heard.

She had been of use to him. He thought her a "capital little woman!"

"It's rather a bad case of bronchitis," the doctor said, going down the stairs. "He hasn't much constitution, I'm afraid; but we must do our best."

He came often during the next few anxious days while the little life hung in the balance, and Jenny watched the child with a devotion that was utterly selfless, and begged that she might continue to do so.

"Not a nurse—don't get a nurse," she begged. "I'll do all you say—and he isn't rich, you know. I'll manage—I will."

"You are not very strong, my girl," the doctor said, with his grave compassion. "You haven't been getting your rest?"

"He's been a bit restless," Jenny admitted,

adding eagerly, "getting his teeth, you know."

"And you don't eat well?" pursued the doctor.

"I haven't fancied much lately," said Jenny casually, "but I'll be better soon, and I'll be here while baby wants me."

The doctor shook his head as he went away.

"Afterwards?" he said to himself.

The end was inevitable, and the child died in Jenny's arms one evening at dusk, Jenny did all that was necessary for him, and, when young Prothero came home, she broke the news to him tenderly.

He was not much troubled. The child had been nothing to him, and the doctor had prepared him for the worst.

Besides, there were reasons, just now, why the death of the little thing seemed a merciful intervention of Providence.

But he followed Jenny into the room where the dead baby lay, and touched the cold little face with his finger.

"Aren't you going to kiss him—just this once—just good-bye?" asked Jenny, with a break in her voice as the young man turned away. "Aren't you—sorry?"

"My good girl," young Prothero said gently, "it was best for him to go. He was a delicate little chap, the doctor says, and he had no mother."

He sighed as he left the room, but his words had stabbed the girl to the heart.

She knelt beside the dead baby, gently smoothing the tiny waxen hands, her sobs choking her.

"I don't think you ever *knew* you hadn't a mother, did you, darling?" she whispered passionately. "Your Jenny did for you, and loved you—you didn't *know* you hadn't a mother!"

When the baby went away, Jenny languished and grew thin, and finally took to her bed. The doctor had a consultation with young Prothero, and then Jenny's master came to her room, pulling at his moustache awkwardly.

"Look here, Jenny," he said, with a rueful attempt at a laugh, "the doctor says you must go where they'll look after you properly. I can't, you know, and you'll be well cared for in the hospital."

Jenny flushed up.

"Me go to a hospital?" she cried, "not likely! Who's to look after you? I'll soon be better. I was thinking of getting up a bit this afternoon."

"No. You won't be better unless you

go," said young Prothero, "and as for me, I shall go away till you come back. I couldn't stop here without you."

"Will you?" she asked softly, looking up into the sunny, handsome face. "Couldn't you really bear the place without me?"

It was not exactly what he had said; but he adopted the amended edition at once.

"Of course I couldn't," he said gaily. "Now you be a good girl; Mrs. Fletcher will see you off when the cab comes. Make haste and get well." And nodding to her he went away, and with him went the sunshine out of the room, or so it seemed to Jenny.

She did not get well very fast at the hospital. There was nothing radically wrong, the doctors said; but she had been over-worked and underfed for months, and it was telling on her naturally weak constitution. She was very patient, very docile, but—she made no progress.

"She's always so restless on visiting days," said the nurse to the doctor, discussing the case. "Is there someone she is expecting, I wonder?"

The visiting days came and passed, came and passed, and each one found her weaker; but no one ever came to see Jenny.

It was about this time that the doctor who had attended young Prothero's wife and baby, and afterwards Jenny, met the young man in the street. Young Prothero was looking very bright and happy, and would have passed the doctor with one of his sunny smiles, but the elder man stopped him.

"How is that plucky little maid of yours?" he asked, "getting better?"

"Really, I don't know," said young Prothero, with a half-ashamed sort of laugh. "I've been very occupied lately, and I've forgotten to inquire. I really ought to."

"If you could find time to pay her a visit," said the doctor quietly, "I think she would be pleased. It's a bit lonely dying in a hospital, and—she did a good deal for that baby of yours."

"So she did—oh, yes, she was a good girl," the young man said carelessly. He paid his visit to Jenny shortly after that, and was shocked at the change in her; but at the sight of him the dull eyes brightened, and the girl's thin face lit up wonderfully as she seized the hand he gave her in both her worn ones, crying joyfully:

"I knew you would come! Oh, I knew you would come!"

"You're not looking very grand," said young Prothero, not quite with his usual ease. "You must get better than this, Jenny. I've been so busy lately," he added apologetically, "that I had quite forgotten you till the doctor—I met him in the street—asked about you. He asked after you very kindly."

"Did he?" Jenny said dully. The light had faded from her eyes as she looked up at the young man's handsome, careless figure standing by her bed. "You have been well?" she asked wistfully. "You have not been ill?"

"Never better in my life," he assured her cheerfully.

She turned from him, lying very still, and her visitor, half-alarmed and not knowing in the least what to say next, looked about him for help. A nurse came to his side, and they held low converse:

"Is she—is there any hope?" young Prothero whispered, looking at Jenny.

"The doctor said there might be if she could be roused," the nurse said doubtfully. "I'm afraid she is too weak now. Still, if you could rouse her——"

Young Prothero leant over the bed and tried to speak cheerfully.

"Come, Jenny! This won't do, you know! I want you to get well and come and look after me again."

A quiver passed over the still face, and she half-turned towards him.

Young Prothero plunged on desperately.

"I could never get another maid as good as you, though I tried all over England. You were just A 1! And, I say, Jenny," he added boyishly, "I shall want you more than ever now, because I'm going to be married to the dearest girl in all the world, and a good servant will make all the difference. Come, Jenny! You must get well to dance at my wedding!"

But Jenny turned her face to the wall.

* * * *

Everybody thought it very generous of young Prothero to pay for the funeral: It took place, by an odd coincidence, on his wedding-day, so that he was not able to attend it; but he saved Jenny from the parish burial which would have been her fate if he had not come to the rescue, for the girl had no money.

"But then," as the new wife's mother remarked feelingly, "that sort of person is always so improvident!"

True Detective Stories. ❖ ❖

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ By M. F. GORON.

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Edited by ALBERT KEYZER. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

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VI.—The Lightning Flash.

DEAR MONSIEUR GORON,—I earnestly beg of you to come to the assistance of my friend, who has met with a disastrous adventure. Please do everything in your power to extricate him from the horrible position in which he is placed. I can vouch for his respectability.—Yours gratefully,

L. DE V—.

The letter was from a gentleman holding a high position in the diplomatic world; and, after I had read it, I glanced at the bearer, a young, distinguished-looking man.

With a slight tremor in his voice, he said:

“I am in great trouble.”

“I see you are,” I replied; “and I hear you are English. What brings you here?”

He paused an instant, and, passing his hand across his forehead, repeated:

“I am in great trouble.”

With a gesture, as if anxious to throw off his secret, he continued:

“My name is Allen B—; and my father is one of the largest colliery owners in the north of England. Six months ago I came to Paris to study painting—”

Again he paused, staring at me. Then suddenly he asked:

“Do I look a swindler—a sharper?”

“No; you do not. Why do you ask?”

“Because, a fortnight ago I rose in the morning with an untarnished reputation, and, although I had committed no wrong whatsoever, I went to bed a disgraced man.”

He was labouring under strong emotion, and as he remained silent, I said:

“Tell me what has occurred.”

“It fell upon me like a thunderbolt, at the house of Madame J—, where I used to go once a week for a game of cards. I was playing piquet, in the smoking-room, with a young fellow called Bernard T—, and had won the first two games. We had just begun the third, when Bernard jumped up and shrieked:

“‘I have caught you at last. You are cheating!’

“The men at the other tables crowded round us, and Madame J—, her daughter Geneviève, and guests, came running in from the adjoining drawing-room, attracted by the noise.

“I had grasped Bernard by the throat, calling out: ‘Retract what you said, you villain, or I will murder you!’

“They dragged him away from me: He was as white as a sheet; and the moment he had caught his breath he shook his fist at me, and bawled:

“‘You say you’ll kill me? You want me to retract? I tell you, you are a cheat, a dirty cheat! Gentlemen, ask him to empty his pockets, here before you, and you’ll see whether I am right!’

“I put my hands in the pockets of my smoking-jacket, and pulled out a dozen cards, corner-bent, like those used by professional sharpers.

“There was a moment of uncanny silence; and then the Vicomte de St.— said to me: ‘This is a very serious affair: Have you any explanation to offer?’

“Then the horror of my situation came upon me. I tried to rush at Bernard,

but they laid hold of me. Frantic with rage I shook them off.

"It's a lie. It's a lie!" I shouted. "Gentlemen, this fellow, or some other scoundrel, has—Heaven knows why—slipped these cards into my pocket. It is a fiendish trick someone has played; and I call upon those here who know me to help to unmask the coward who did it!"

"They looked at me in silence, and, after a whispered consultation, the Vicomte de St.—spoke again:

"Mr. B——, I think it will be best if you and M. Bernard T—— withdraw for a few minutes to allow us to discuss this matter, and decide on the course to take."

"Bernard went upstairs to Madame's boudoir, and I to the drawing-room, where I found Mademoiselle Geneviève alone. For a while she took no notice of me as I nervously paced up and down the room; but when I stopped she remarked in a soft voice:

"Monsieur Allen, I am sure you are innocent."

"I pressed her small hand.

"God bless you, Mademoiselle Geneviève, I shall never forget your kind words. But, since you do not doubt me, I implore you to tell me whether you have any suspicion, any idea, as to who could have laid this trap for me. Forgive me asking you this, and possibly casting aspersions on any of your mother's guests. But, remember, my honour is at stake."

"She thought for a moment, and replied:

"No, Monsieur Allen, I have not the faintest idea. I wish I could help you."

"She looked up, and I could read in her eyes that she had spoken the truth.

"At that instant a gentleman asked me to come into the next room; and the Vicomte de St.—addressed me as follows:

"Having been the unwilling witnesses of this affair, we consider it our duty, as gentlemen and men of the world, to prevent any unnecessary scandal. M. Bernard T—— has accused you of playing unfairly, which you deny. Marked cards have been found in your pocket; and your explanation is that someone had placed them there. We now have pledged ourselves not to divulge what has occurred here this evening, so as to give you time to refute this charge. You can rely on our absolute discretion; and I call upon M. Bernard T—— to

promise us not to breathe a word about this to anyone."

"I give you my word," said Bernard.

"His word!" I exclaimed; "how much do you think it is worth? Gentlemen, I once more declare that this man is a liar; and, that if he did not put the cards in my pockets he knows who did. And——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the Vicomte, "we cannot allow this. We sincerely hope you may prove your innocence—we hope it for your sake. And this is all we have to say to you for the present."

After a pause my visitor resumed:

"I have no recollection of how I got home that evening; and even the next morning I could not realise that it had not been a fearful dream. For several days I was trying to unravel this astounding mystery, when I received two letters from England. The first was from my father. The poor man is heart-broken. He had had a full account of what had occurred at Madame's house. He advises me to go away somewhere, to the Colonies, and remain there till this affair is forgotten. The other letter was——"

He again stopped and hid his face in his hands.

"It was from my *fiancée*, the girl I was to have married in three months, on my return to England. She, too, knew all about it, and, in a few words informed me that I must consider our engagement at an end. I at once wrote to my father and to my *fiancée*, telling them that I had been the victim of a horrible plot, imploring them to reply by return of post; but neither of them has sent me a line. I then remembered my friend, L. de V——, a school chum, now in the diplomatic service. He has known me all my life; and, after I had told him my story, he gave me this introduction to you. Monsieur Goron, I beg of you to help me!"

"I certainly will try to help you," I replied, "but your story is incomplete. I want to hear more about these people—the Vicomte, Bernard T——, Madame J——, and, even—if you allow me—about Mademoiselle Geneviève. Who are they?"

"Madame J—— is the widow of a naval officer. I was introduced to her the first week I arrived in Paris, by a man in the studio where I am painting. She receives every other evening. The Vicomte is an old friend of hers, and, I am told, a member of the Jockey Club. Bernard

T——'s acquaintance I made also at Madame's house. We have often dined together and gone to theatres."

"Has he a profession? How does he get his living?"

"He is, I think, an insurance-broker; but he has money, and does not seem to work very hard."

"And Mademoiselle Geneviève? Last, but probably not least."

"You are right, Monsieur Goron—last, but not least; for I believe she is the innocent cause of this business. I have been thinking night and day, and I am sure I have found the clue to this mystery."

He coloured slightly, and said:

"I am afraid what I am going to tell you will sound rather foolish, but you will see it is important. Bernard T—— is in love with Geneviève, a strikingly handsome girl. She has of late shown me marked partiality; and in his mad jealousy Bernard has got this up to ruin me in her eyes."

"And this, according to you, is the clue to the affair?"

"Undoubtedly. There can be no other cause why anybody should try to compromise me in such a horrible way: With your help we will get to the bottom of it."

"It is a queer, a very queer business; darker than you seem to think. I do not say this to alarm you, but to prepare you for a few surprises. Give me the addresses of all the people you have just mentioned, and come here to-morrow at four o'clock. Don't think of revenge; this may or may not come later. The first thing to be done is to clear you."

My visitor thanked me, and went away with a lighter step. But when he returned the following day he looked more distressed than before.

"What has gone wrong?" I asked: "Any fresh trouble?"

"No," he replied moodily, "except that I have had a letter from our lawyer begging me to go away at once—for the honour of the family."

With a suppressed oath he threw the letter on my table.

"Never mind the lawyer. Tell him to go to the—Colonies himself. Since I saw you I have looked into the matter, and have gathered a little useful information. Firstly, let me tell you that your theory about Bernard's jealousy does not hold water. Excuse my asking you—have you ever, say, flirted with the girl?"

"Never."

"Have you given her any presents, or made appointments with her?"

"Never."

"All the better, for it simplifies matters: Another question. Do they play baccarat at Madame J——'s?"

"Yes, three or four times a week."

"Did you play?"

"Yes, but I gave it up because——"

"You found you lost too much?"

"You've guessed it: I did lose."

"How much?"

"About four hundred pounds."

"Just what I expected. I have received some queer reports about your friends: Madame J——'s reputation is far from good; and I suspect her *salon* to be a trap to swindle people like you: Bernard T—— certainly did inherit some money last year, but he ran through it, and he is now the associate, and possibly the tool, of professional gamblers. As to the Vicomte, there is some mystery here, and I distrust mysteries. And now, my dear Mr. B—— I am afraid I must say something that will upset you. You have undoubtedly an enemy—not that Bernard—but a man, or woman, who has a more potent interest in ruining your reputation. Look into the past, and see whether you can detect any such person."

Mr. B—— stared at me in amazement:

"An enemy!" he cried. "I, an enemy? I have never stood in anybody's way, and no man in mine. As to women, they have played no part in my life. I have fallen in love only once—and that was with the girl I was to have married," he added, with a bitter smile.

"You will not be the first to have made such a startling discovery: Others have made it, and in this very room, too. I also see I must not look to you for assistance in this business: Keep quiet until you hear from me. I hope it will be soon."

I do not know a more villainous offence than that of sullyng a man's reputation, to rob him of what is dearer to him than life—his honour. And I resolved to use all my energy in this poor fellow's assistance, especially as the conviction grew upon me that my young friend was the victim of a plot, a fiendish conspiracy, and that those who slipped the incriminating cards into his pockets were only the instruments of scoundrels, who would remain in the dark unless I dragged them into the light.

During his narrative of the tragic scene at Madame J——'s house I had not been favourably impressed by the attitude of this Vicomte, the self-constituted president of the impromptu tribunal of honour. I therefore decided to leave the fiery Bernard alone for the present, and take the mysterious nobleman in hand, after having first found out who he was.

I confided the latter mission to Nicholas, one of my men, whom his colleagues had nicknamed "The Diver," on account of his wonderful skill in "diving" into people's pasts, and unearthing the most hidden secrets. I did not see my "diver" for two days; but when he turned up he looked happy, and handed me his report. It was one of his weaknesses. He had started life as a writing-master, and as he wrote a beautiful hand he seized every opportunity of making a caligraphic display.

The report read as follows:—

Hector St.—, born in Paris in 1850, of Greek parents. Enlisted at nineteen in the Papal Zouaves. Three years later emigrated to Australia. In 1876 was in Italy, where received the title of Vicomte from the Pope. In Florence eloped with the wife of well-known banker. Came to Paris, and in 1879 was implicated in turf scandal. For reasons that did not transpire was asked to resign his membership of the Y— Club. Remained two years in England, after which returned to Paris. Has small apartment in Rue Labordère. Is well known in the baccarat world. Is one of the supporters of new gambling club opened a month ago in the Rue Maubeuge. Goes there nearly every night. Means unknown; but is not believed to have a fixed income.

P.S.—The night before last, at half-past twelve, sent for a policeman because Marthe D——, his former paramour, was creating a disturbance outside his place.

"The Diver" had acquitted himself well of his task, and I told him so. But what he could not know was that the most important part of his report was in the *post-scriptum*.

I went to the Police Commissary in the Vicomte's district, and asked him to give me some details about the disturbance caused by Marthe D——. She had, it seems, smashed a window, and used threatening language; and the Vicomte had applied for a summons.

I sent for her, and a little before six she was announced; a tall, dark-eyed girl, who played an insignificant part in the new farce at the Folies-Dramatiques. She was very self-possessed, and asked what I wanted of her.

An Eastern proverb says: "That it is easier to extract honey from a donkey's

foot than the truth from an angry woman"; and I made up my mind not to attach too much value to the statements the young lady would very likely make. For all that, I was anxious to have a chat with her, and as the offence she had committed did not come within my sphere of action, I pretended I wanted some information about an accident that had occurred at her theatre. Having replied to my questions in a quiet voice, she rose to go, when I said to her:

"And so you had a scene with your friend, the Vicomte?"

She turned sharply round, and her eyes grew warlike.

"My friend, you call him? I can dispense with such friends. When a man borrows money from a woman and does not pay her, the least he can do is to be civil to her!"

"That is true. Why did he borrow money from you?"

"I don't know. At times he has plenty of cash, and at others not a cent."

"I suppose he gambles a bit?"

"You bet! Since he goes to that new club in the Rue Maubeuge he is always flush with money. He has been wonderfully lucky there; too much so, I fancy."

"Why too much so?"

"Oh, I don't know!" And she shrugged her shoulders.

I did not think it prudent to press the point.

"If he borrowed money from you, and, as you say, has now plenty, why does he not pay you?"

"He might have done so, but he has his silly pride. He was annoyed I alluded to it in the presence of his friend, an Englishman—although that man did not understand a word of French—and he had specially asked me not to come that evening. I would have done better to have gone away, as I was getting cross at their talking English all the time."

"Possibly he, too, was cross if the Englishman paid you too much attention."

"No," she laughed—"he is too fond of himself to notice such things. And the Englishman was too much engrossed in what the Vicomte was saying."

I was getting interested in that Englishman:

"And the evening ended in a storm?"

"Rather. After the man had left, the Vicomte and I had a violent quarrel, and he told me he would never see me again. The

following evening, when I went to his place to ask for my money, I was refused admittance. You know the rest."

"Yes. And it was foolish of you to have taken the law into your own hands."

She remained a moment in thought.

"Monsieur Goron," she said at last, "I am sorry I did such a stupid thing. Cannot you assist me?"

"I don't see how I can; it does not lie in my power. But suppose the Vicomte should withdraw the charge?"

"He withdraw? He? You don't know him. He is vindictive, and he would ruin me if he could."

"Tut! tut! I see a possibility."

"Oh, Monsieur, I would be so grateful to you. You don't know how sorry I am. It may injure my position at the theatre," and she burst out crying.

"All right, Mademoiselle, I will see what can be done. But it is necessary I should know something about this Englishman, who may have been the indirect cause of the row that night. Who is he?"

"I have forgotten his name. I only saw it once, on a note sent to his hotel."

"Do you remember the address?"

"Let me think. Yes, now I do—Hotel de la Gare du Nord, opposite the station."

"Is he young or old?"

"I should say thirty-three or four, short, rather stout, with a dark moustache."

"That will do. Good-bye; I shall remember my promise."

An hour later I learnt that a Mr. Harold W—— had stayed at that hotel; that he had left the night before; and had forgotten a pair of braces and a book.

I asked for the volume:

If I had been a detective of fiction, who, by glancing at your left boot can tell you your age, the name of your dog, and how much money you have at your banker's, that book would undoubtedly have unfolded extraordinary mysteries. But as I was not one of these wonderful creatures, I examined the volume and noticed it bore on the cover the initials E. K.; and on a torn envelope inside, the name—Edward K——.

Beyond the meagre details Allen B—— had given me I had only my reasoning to guide me. And I also knew it would be dangerous to approach any of the actors in this affair, with the view of obtaining more evidence. The men who had carried out their diabolical plot with such skill had to be treated in the same way as they

had treated their victim. My only chance was to strike them before they could ward off the blow.

Bernard knew that Allen was engaged; that he would return to England before the end of the year; and that there was no necessity to stoop to a crime to rid himself of a supposed rival.

On the other hand, despite the promises of secrecy given by the members of that wonderful tribunal, Allen's people received a full report of the affair within three days. It was quite evident, therefore, that the object of the conspiracy was to injure Allen, not in the eyes of a damsel of no importance, but in those of his relations.

After a moment's hesitation, I gave up my intention to send for Allen B—— to ask him whether he knew Harold W—— or Edward K——, who, as I had good reason to believe, were one and the same person. I felt confident I was on the right trail, and decided to start operations that very night.

In the course of my career I remember having only twice assumed a disguise, and this was one of the occasions. I do not aspire to rival M. Gémier or Mr. Beerbohm Tree in the art of making oneself unrecognisable; but, with a few touches about the eyes, the nose; with a dark wig, dyed moustachios and eyebrows, I felt pretty safe as I issued forth to enter the enemy's camp.

I was no longer M. Goron, of the Detective Police, but M. Achille Huard, boot-manufacturer at Limoges; and had taken the precaution of sending a note to one of my friends—who kept a hotel in the Rue de Provence—asking him to say, in reply to any inquiries, that M. Huard, respectably known in Limoges, was staying there. That gentleman had died the year before, but as I happened to have one of his cards, I took the liberty of taking his name.

At ten o'clock in the evening I presented myself at the "Club" in the Rue Maubeuge. As I expected, I was informed that only members had a right to enter, but the door-keeper took my card, after which a gentleman came downstairs, eyed me narrowly, asked me for my address, and, apparently satisfied with my appearance, remarked that I could join as a country member.

"It is not quite regular," he said, "for me to admit you before you are properly introduced; but, as you do not reside in Paris, and intend to return soon to Limoges, we will allow you to come in now, on payment

of the entrance fee: You must be duly proposed and seconded."

I knew the old story; I had heard it before.

I then entered the baccarat room, where, round a long table covered with green baize, a dozen people were seated. I looked round me: It was still early and the business of the evening had not begun. The players were of the ordinary type: The majority of them pigeons ready to be plucked; the rest bearing the undeniable stamp of the professional gambler. My attention, however, was centred on the croupier.

Few people—even those in the habit of risking their money in fashionable clubs or in casinos of well-known watering-places—have a remote idea of the important post this official holds. With a long, flat, wooden scoop—something like a cricket bat—he rakes in the counters from the losers, and pays the winning side.

In great clubs these men are carefully watched to avoid any trickery, but in the small gambling dens their rôle is altogether a different one. When someone opens one of these dens, which, being clubs, can only be raided with difficulty, the croupier becomes his partner. Both are bent on robbery.

If the proprietor—always a professional sharper—takes the bank, he will cheat the players by a series of tricks, too numerous to be explained here. When, however, a guileless stranger acts as banker, the croupier's rôle comes in; for, whilst he rakes in the money for the banker, a portion of it disappears into his pockets in a manner which only the most expert eye can detect.

And it is for this reason that in all these clubs counters, instead of money, are used. Some of these counters represent so much as 500 and even 1000 francs each; and I have known of cases where 6000 francs and more have been stolen in one night. At the close of the evening the proceeds of the robbery are divided between the proprietor and his croupier.

For the benefit of the uninitiated I will explain the principles of the game.

The players sit on the right and left of the banker, who has several complete packs of cards in front of him. When the players have staked their money the banker deals one card to the right, one to the left, and one to himself. He repeats this operation.

One of the players on either side of the

banker takes up the cards, and plays them against the banker for his side of the table.

The object of the game is to score nine—not more—or as near that number as possible with the two cards; a third can be had if desired. Court cards and tens are valueless. If the total of the pips comes to more than ten, ten must be deducted.

If the banker's score is below that of the players he loses, if above he wins.

Slowly the room began to fill, and towards half-past eleven a tall, thin man with a greyish beard and small, piercing eyes came in; and, from the description given me I recognised the Vicomte de St. —. He smoked a cigarette, paying little attention to what went on at the table, where a banker, with only 300 francs in the bank, was dealing his cards in a desultory fashion.

All at once the Vicomte's face brightened, and he went up with extended hands to some fashionably-dressed men who had just entered. I guessed they were what in gambling-house parlance is called "Big Game." I then gave up my seat at the table, where I was too much in view, and stood behind the players, whence I could watch everything.

A bright-looking youth took the bank for 5000 francs, and play began in real earnest. Somebody called "Banco" (staking all there is in the bank), and the excitement rose to a high pitch:

Thus far the Vicomte had not joined in the game; at last, to my delight, I saw him take a bank, also for 5000 francs. He called for fresh cards:

This call for fresh cards at such a time demands an explanation: In the gambling world it is well known that after the cards have been shuffled, cut, and placed in front of the banker, it is easy for the latter, by sleight of hand, to put a few prepared cards on the top that will give him two or three winning deals. If, therefore, the banker asks for fresh cards, the uninitiated—and, unfortunately, they form the majority—suppose that no trickery is possible. I am sorry to have to disabuse them.

The worst swindles are practised with so-called new packs. I say "so-called," because in the directorial sanctum they have undergone a curious process. The pack is held over a steaming kettle, the wrapper skilfully removed, the cards are taken out, arranged to give the dealer the advantage;

and again carefully replaced in the original wrapper.

The study I had, in former years, been compelled to make of these practices now proved useful, and I moved behind the Vicomte's chair, so as not to lose one of his movements.

Five new packs were brought in, and the croupier undid four, leaving one on the mantelpiece. He shuffled the four packs with a great deal of zest, yet so dexterously that their order was not altered. The man was a great expert in the "sham-shuffling" trick.

Of all the people in the room I, certainly, was the most interested in the game, for I was playing for higher stakes than any of them—for a man's honour. Supposing these cards, brought on a tray, should not have been tampered with; supposing the Vicomte played a fair game, without any attempt at cheating, my whole combination fell to the ground, and I would have to invent another mode of attack.

I held my breath when the first cards were dealt; and then a feeling of relief came over me, for I at once recognised the famous combination, known as the "705," or, more appropriately, "The Lightning Flash," on account of the rapidity with which it cleans out its victims. And, by way of curiosity, I give below this extraordinary series, from which it will be seen that, with the exception of two deals, where banker and players have the same points, the former wins every coup. *The players may cut as many times as they like; it will not affect the game!**

A quarter of an hour later the Vicomte rose. He smiled and could well afford to do so, for he had made a big haul. Three o'clock struck, the last bank, a small one, had been dealt. Everybody left; and I was lying on the sofa pretending to be asleep.

"Who's that?" I heard the Vicomte ask.

"Oh, it's a chap from Limoges. He came to-night for the first time," was the reply.

I jumped up and said to the Vicomte:

* THE LIGHTNING FLASH.

Each pack of fifty-two cards is arranged in the following order, face upwards. The noughts represent either court cards or tens, which, in baccarat, are valueless.

7	0	5	9	0	2	6	0	4	1	3	6	0
8	0	1	2	6	9	0	8	7	0	9	7	0
4	9	0	2	5	0	4	8	0	3	2	0	8
:	1	3	5	5	3	4	0	0	0	6	0	7

"I want a few moments' conversation with you."

He looked hard at me, and conducted me to the next room. I took off my wig; but before I could utter a word, the Vicomte placed himself in front of the door.

"Get away from there!" I commanded. "I am M. Goron. Don't attempt any nonsense, or I call up my men, and have you and your croupier taken to the Dépôt!"

He could not suppose that I had come unaccompanied, and silently took a chair.

"Perhaps you will tell me what all this means?" he asked.

"Certainly. But first ring the bell, and send away your servants."

My orders were obeyed.

"And now," I continued, "follow me into the card-room."

I led the way, and from the mantelpiece took the fifth pack left there when the Vicomte had dealt the cards.

The croupier, who had remained behind, moved towards the door.

"Come here!" I shouted to him, "take off your coat and waistcoat, and hand them to me."

He did so, trembling with fear, and out of several long pockets, lined with velvet to deaden the sound, I took a handful of counters.

"You scoundrel!" I said, "I watched you do this. And now, clear out. I want to talk to your master—and accomplice."

I handed the Vicomte the pack of cards I had taken up, and said:

"Let me call them over to you with my back turned. Seven, nought, five, nine, nought—I forget the rest; but I think this ought to be enough. I have seen the 'Lightning Flash' done before. Do you want any more reasons why I came here to-night?"

He seemed stunned and shook his head.

"Cannot this scandal be avoided?" he asked.

"Expect nothing from me until you have told me the whole truth about the Allen B—— affair at Madame J——'s. What was the object of that conspiracy, and who is at the bottom of it?"

He looked at me with a cunning expression.

"I think I see your game, Monsieur Goron. Allow me to compliment you on your skill. In other words, you want me to make certain disclosures. In that case, it is but right I should——"

I gave him no time to finish his sentence ; but, seizing him roughly by the arm, shouted :

"I arrest you, you scamp !"

What I expected happened. The coward in him came to the fore. He cringed and crawled, and then told me he had instructed Bernard T—— to slip the cards in poor Allen B——'s pockets.

"Whose orders did you carry out in doing this ?"

"An Englishman's."

"Harold W——, or in reality, Edward K—— ?"

He gave me a glance which expressed great surprise.

"Yes."

"For what reason ?"

"I don't know. You can believe me. It is a secret between him and Allen B——, and I would never have done this thing had I not been in Edward K——'s hands. He compelled me to do it."

He put his statement down in writing, and then took me to his apartment, where, at my request, he handed me two letters from Edward K——.

I was on the point of leaving, when I remembered Mademoiselle Marthe.

"Sit down again, and write a note to the Police Commissary in your district that you wish to withdraw your charge against Marthe D——."

The Vicomte, who had given up feeling surprised at anything, wrote the note, and handed it to me.

It was six o'clock and broad daylight when I reached home. I at once sent for Allen B——.

"Who is Edward K—— ?" I asked before he had time even to sit down.

"A distant connection. Why do you want to know ?"

"What object had he in disgracing you ?"

"He ? Impossible—he belongs to a first-class county family."

I stamped my foot with a gesture of impatience.

"Blow your county families. Read this," and I handed the Vicomte's statement to him.

I never thought it possible that delight and horror could be expressed at the same time on anybody's face. Allen B—— performed that extraordinary feat. Then he shook me by both hands until my arms ached, and exclaimed :

"What a scoundrel ! Who could have dreamt this ! Monsieur Goron, it all dawns upon me now. Three years ago that man proposed to the lady to whom I afterwards became engaged. She rejected him, and he——"

"That will do. These are family secrets. I don't want to know more than I can help. Leave at once for England. This document and these two letters will clear you, and if anybody wants more information, refer them to me."

He again wrung my hands, too moved to speak, and then he took up his hat and stick.

"One more word before you go," I said. "Do you know what strikes me as the queerest part about this queer affair ? It is that, whilst your father and the lady you were about to marry threw you over, without even giving you a hearing, two people here in Paris—one your humble servant, and the other, the daughter of a woman who keeps a gambling house—believed in you. But in this life only the improbable comes true. And now go—I feel tired."

* * * *

The Vicomte and the croupier left Paris the next day. I afterwards learnt that they had taken themselves off to South America.

Before a week had elapsed I received a letter from Allen B——. For the "honour of the family (I wondered he did not say 'county family') it had been decided to send Edward K—— to the 'Colonies.'" Of his *fiancée* he made not the slightest mention.

(Next month will appear the seventh story in this series : "Fighting the Ghosts.")

"Mind Your Own Business."

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ By WYMAN SHAW.

The romance of a cryptogram.

OBADIAH POTTERBY had been "gifted" since childhood with a highly-developed faculty of inquisitiveness; or, as he preferred to call it, "a spirit of keen mental research."

Up to now Obadiah's attribute (call it what you will) had not done much for him from a material point of view. At the age of thirty he occupied a subordinate position in a large City office and drew a salary of £150 a year in return for duties which could well have been performed by a bright youth of fifteen. The will of a deceased parent, however, provided Obadiah with an annuity of £300 a year, so that in a pecuniary sense he had little to worry about.

One bright May morning Potterby sat reading his daily paper, and it will not surprise the astute reader to learn that Obadiah's eyes were fixed on the Agony Column. This always appealed to him with an intense fascination, and on the morning in question there appeared among the others one message of an engrossing character.

To commence with, the paragraph was in cipher, and Obadiah was as fond of mysteries as an amateur detective. He knew something of cryptograms and their keys, and he bent his gaze on the meaningless jumble of letters and figures with fierce determination to learn their purport.

Before the arrival of luncheon time our astute hero was glowing with a sense of thrilling victory. It is the author's reluctant duty to state that the cryptogram was very simple; unkind people might have termed it childishly simple, but we will resolutely refuse to let this fact overcome our admiration for the solver's skill.

The cipher was effected by a transposition of letters, "z" standing for "a," "y" for "b," etc., the vowels being supplied by the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. With the key in his possession it was not long before the exultant discoverer had placed each letter in its

rightful place, whereupon the following met his feverishly anxious gaze:

SWAGSAFELYCOLLAREDBURIEDFOOTOAKT-
REENEARENTRANCEOLDGATEWOODSBET-
HERENEXTSATURDAYNIGHTELEVENARRA-
NGEFURTHERPLANS.

It was the work of a minute to separate the words forming this message, and then Obadiah's startled eyes rested on this sinister sentence:

"Swag safely collared. Buried foot (of) oak tree near entrance (to) Oldgate Woods. Be there next Saturday night (at) eleven (to) arrange further plans."

A gasp of mingled amazement and exultation came from the reader's lips. At last—at last his vigorous spirit of mental research had been rewarded. Mentally he saw his name in the papers (likewise his portrait) and a big headed heading:

HOW TWO DARING BURGLARS WERE
TRACKED DOWN BY A CLEVER YOUNG
AMATEUR DETECTIVE.

A Shrewd Lesson to Scotland Yard Men:

Yes, there could be no doubt about it;

He *had* made a big discovery, and he intended to get the full credit for it. To-day was Friday, and to-morrow at eleven the two culprits would meet at the trysting-place, all unconscious of the fact that a keen mind had penetrated their secret. Little did they dream that he (Obadiah Potterby) would be there, and with him the myrmidons of the law, ready to perform their task.

Early on Saturday afternoon our intrepid hero paid a visit to Scotland Yard, and, having gained the privilege of an interview with a certain detective officer, laid bare the salient facts of his errand. That night at eleven o'clock, he explained, two notorious burglars (Obadiah never doubted that they *were* notorious) would meet at one of the entrances to the famed Oldgate Woods. He also explained that the valuable proceeds of one of their latest burglaries were buried at a spot near to the entrance, and this spot he (Obadiah) would be able to indicate to

the properly-accredited officers of the law accompanying him:

Obadiah had anticipated that the detective officer would spring to his feet with a cry of mingled astonishment and triumph on hearing his news. But the representative of Scotland Yard did nothing of the kind. He only looked hard at Obadiah and wanted to know where this gentleman had obtained his information.

"Just as I suspected," thought the latter cunningly. "He wants to take the credit to himself. Artful beggar—but I'm up to his little tricks."

Therefore, with a look of inflexible determination on his visage, Obadiah regretted that he was unable to comply with this request. He could only inform the detective of the main facts. More (for the moment) he was unable to disclose.

Finally the amateur detective triumphantly gained his point. The Scotland Yard man consented (albeit with no good grace) to allow three officers to accompany Obadiah that night, and intimated that he (the Yard man) would come with them.

About eight o'clock that evening a drizzling rain set in, and it may be here stated that it did not cease till early the following morning. But the rain had no power to damp Obadiah's spirits. Never before had he felt so supremely happy. Early that evening he had written out a full and detailed account of his great discovery, and the manuscript had been posted to the office of a certain daily paper.

To-morrow the country would ring with his fame!

The journey to Oldgate Woods (which lie on the outskirts of northernmost London) is pleasant enough in Summer, but on a wet Winter's night very much the reverse.

The policemen who accompanied Obadiah (to say nothing of the Yard man) were picturesquely fluent on the subject. Ever and anon they gazed at Obadiah, and their expressions were anything but friendly.

But the amateur investigator was oblivious of these glances and deaf to their heated mutterings. He thought only of the morrow's triumph, as he waded almost knee-deep through the slush and mire towards the place which was to bring him fame and perhaps (who knows?) fortune too.

At last the spot was reached. Yes, there stood the old oak tree, the heavy rain (it was coming down harder than ever) swishing through its gnarled branches.

Overcome with eagerness Obadiah rushed

forward, and a cry of triumph escaped his lips as he saw that a portion of earth near the tree's roots bore plain evidence of having recently been disturbed.

"This is the spot," he said gaspingly. "Now we shall be able to secure the booty before the scoundrels arrive."

One of the constables was provided with a small shovel, and this was immediately called into requisition. A few vigorous turns of the blade and the lid of a small wooden box was disclosed to view.

Obadiah's eyes fairly blazed with the excitement and gratification of that moment, and even the detective forgot his soaking clothes and manifested symptoms of interest.

It was not long before the box was dragged from its resting-place, and using the blade of the shovel as a lever a constable easily succeeded in wrenching open the lid.

What met the eyes of that eager group? Diamonds, rubies, silver plate?

Alas, no! The box was filled with nothing more valuable than cobble-stones, on the top of which reposed a square of white cardboard. On this was traced in big, fat, printed characters the following:

PERHAPS THE SILLY IDIOT WHO
READS THIS WILL IN FUTURE SEE
THE WISDOM OF MINDING HIS
OWN BUSINESS!

* * * * *

The distance from Oldgate Woods to the nearest 'bus or train terminus is about two miles, and that walk back from the scene of his anticipated triumph Obadiah will always count as one of the most painful ordeals of his existence. The observations of the constables (and the Yard man) were unprintable, and it was with extreme difficulty that the former were restrained from more violent measures.

Worse was to come, for the tale of Obadiah's spoofing appeared next morning in one of the daily papers, and for the space of a week it enjoyed almost the reputation of a national joke.

Obadiah took a month's holiday from the office on the plea of ill-health, and there is little doubt that his constitution suffered from the unrestrained chaff of his colleagues.

The authors of the jest were never discovered, but the voice of rumour states that the idea emanated from a certain band of merry Oxford undergraduates.

Certain it is that Obadiah received a much-needed lesson, and to-day the bare mention of the word "cryptogram" sends a shudder through his frame.

Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction.

Though foreign fiction-writers often employ plots similar to those adopted by writers in our own language, their methods of working out the stories are very different. Some idea of this may be obtained from a perusal of the stories in this feature, which are really first-rate translations of the works of the most eminent foreign authors.

THE BARONESS OF CABO VERDE.

By AFFONSO BOTELHO. (From the Portuguese. Translated by Laura Delaforce.)

Portuguese writers differ in one very important point from their confrères of Britain, in that, almost without exception, writer and scholar are synonymous terms. Practically speaking, the working classes cannot read, and the women of the middle-classes (who in England are such great readers) are too domesticated and industrious to spend their time in this way. Portuguese fiction is consequently written, not for the million, but for scholars, by scholars.

"Padding" does not enter into the composition of a story apart from the brilliant repartee which, in most cases, if translatable in words, is quite the reverse in equivalent, for the ideas of wit of Southerners are diametrically opposed to those of Northerners.

It is quite common in short stories to give no hint of the locality, and to exclude all but the bare facts necessary to frame the plot. The following is an example of this type of story. Affonso Botelho was one of the best known and most popular of Portuguese writers. He died only last year:

GOING up the river Douro, turning sharply round one of its ever-recurring corners, one came face to face with a solid old country house built of granite, and with its two lateral towers closely resembling an old feudal castle. There were no other houses of any size or importance at the time of our narrative, which takes us quite two hundred years back, though the adjacent *sierra do pillar* was here and there dotted with poor labourers' cottages.

This large house was the seat of the Baron and Baroness of Cabo Verde, who lived there with their private chaplain, Father Mathias, who was also their steward:

From the windows of her apartments the Baroness could enjoy a splendid panorama of the river and mountain, in their ever-changing aspects—now gilded with the rich tones of the rising sun, now wrapped in the sable shades of evening, only made visible by the dim lights issuing from the cottars' homes, and some of the brighter stars of the western firmament:

The Baroness had been born in that house, she had lost her parents there, it was there

that her marriage was celebrated, and she knew, in fact, no other world.

Life for her was regarded from a simple prism, and its duties consisted in loving her husband and making him happy; besides this, aided by their private chaplain, she sought, by means of alms, to alleviate the misery or distress of her poorer neighbours; such were the principles she had inherited from her saintly mother—a *grande dame* of the olden times.

The Baron was considered an easy-going man, who spent all his time hunting and shooting, and whenever approached on the subject of administration of their property, he invariably replied emphatically, that such things were the domain of the Baroness; and with a gun on his shoulders and followed by two hounds, was seen early every morning ascending the steep paths of the *sierra do pillar*.

Very often on his return from shooting, the Baron stopped at the door of one of the huts on the hill, which stood a little apart from the others. There was a stone seat outside, on which he usually rested. He would take off his wide-awake hat, have a

general look at the horizon before him, and call out to the mistress of the house :

"Maria, bring me a jug of water !"

Maria generally deprecated serving the water in an earthenware jug, and used to say :

"Though very poor, sir, we have a glass tumbler."

"No, no, Maria: I prefer this earthenware vessel; the water tastes better. How is the little girl ?"

"Always at work, sir. Don't you hear her ?"

As their conversation ceased, he could hear inside the "trek-trek" of the loom at which the child worked all day:

"Your daughter is a first-rate weaver, Maria; God bless her !"

"She works for ever, sir. How can we avoid it ? We are so poor."

"Has the Baroness sent for you ?"

"Not yet, sir."

"I believe the Baroness wishes to begin the usual piece of linen; go over and inquire."

All the time, in a kind of undertone, the dismal voice of the loom went on with its regular monotony.

Here and there on the side of the hill the smoke rose from other peasants' huts, and a little lower down could be seen the pointed roofs of the Baroness' castle, with its rugged terrace, uneven garden, and the river lazily flowing on in curve after curve, heedless of human toil.

As the Baron left, he cried out :

"Good-bye, Luisita !"

A girl of about sixteen—a brunette, but beautiful—with jet-black eyes, velvety and unspeakably sweet, answered :

"Good afternoon, sir."

"I thought you did not wish to speak to me to-day, Luisita."

"How could you doubt it, sir ? I had not heard you: With the rumbling of the loom, I had not heard you were here, and I have a piece of work in hand that I am in a hurry to finish: : : "

"All right, all right, little woman ! I must be off, it is getting late."

"Good afternoon," repeated mother and daughter in chorus.

When the Baron was already a little way off, Luisita shouted out :

"How did you get on with your shooting ?"

The Baron retraced his steps.

"Well, I might have done worse. Keep this rabbit, it will do for supper."

"Oh, thank you, sir ; but I had no idea of encroaching on your bag when I asked."

"I know that, but don't blush ; you look prettier, but it is not worth while."

Followed by his dogs the Baron finally descended towards his house:

His visits to the weaver's house became more and more frequent, and the Baron grew accustomed to look forward to his informal chats with little Luisita and her mother.

* * * *

Alas ! the shadow of death was hovering over the humble abode of those simple peasant women. Luisita's mother had been ailing for some time. The Baron sent in the family doctor, but medicine seemed impotent against the fell disease. Maria wasted rapidly day by day. One early morning in April, heralding a glorious day, perfumed with the scent of wild honeysuckle and a hundred other sweet perfumes from the still of Nature, Luisita found herself literally alone in the world:

The blow was staggering, apart from the fact that she tenderly loved the mother whose life had been wholly dedicated to the welfare of Luisita.

Time went on, the Baron continued his visits to the house, and now went in and spent hours speaking about the mother who was dead:

The girl found great benefit and solace in mourning for her mother and opening her heart to the Baron. She sat at the loom working, and he sat alongside, talking about her mother, and helping her to resign herself to her new and trying misfortune.

Her white hands, more carefully kept than those of other country girls, showed well over the white linen she wove, and the "trek-trek" of the loom went on as of yore.

The Baron began to feel a strange pleasure in watching the sweet face and graceful movements of Luisita, and in that simple and friendly intercourse hours were spent by the Baron, leaving absolutely no record on his mind of the flight of time.

The Baroness left home on a visit to some of her relations in Beira, so the Baron was left alone with the chaplain of the castle ; and by degrees he began to extend his visits to Luisita until it was quite late in the evenings.

When at last he sought rest on the large, antique bedstead at the castle, he turned and turned, a prey to insomnia and feverish

excitement, in which the form of Luisita glided before him in fantastic dreams.

One evening, without he himself knowing exactly how it happened, it had become quite dark before he left the cottage. Luisita had left the loom and come and sat by the window. The moonlight added greatly to the charm of her divine form. The rest of the squalid room was in utter darkness.

The Baron felt nervous shudders, and was unable to avert his eyes from the moonlit form by the window. Then instinctively he approached her, and became more and more absorbed in that divine vision.

Luisita turned round, fixed her eyes on him, and involved his whole nature in the caresses of her look. She continued her ardent, gazing reverie as if a magnetic philtre held them both spell-bound.

The Baron took her in his arms. Later on the darkness of the room was invaded by the romantic and melancholy light of the moon, in the presence of which the lovers parted for that day.

* * * *

When the Baroness returned from Beira she found at once someone eager to inform her of the Baron's affection for the weaver. The Baroness could not believe it, and answered rather crossly to the old woman who took upon herself the rôle of informer.

She told her that it was wrong to attribute such motives to people; that she knew her husband's principles. It was infamous to take his character away; merely because he was fond of chatting to a girl, both were accused of a crime. The old woman left, feeling sorry she had given way to her mischief-making propensities.

The Baroness really could not believe her husband had been untrue to her; in the purity of her soul such a possibility was undreamt of and most indignantly contemplated.

Days, however, passed by, and the venomous trail of the malevolent old woman gradually worked up its corrosive effect on the mind of the noble wife.

Her husband now was invariably late in returning from his shooting expeditions; she noticed also his absent mind. More than once it was quite dark before he came home, and in an apologetic way the Baron mentioned he had lost his way in the *sierra*. He was morose and suffered from deep melancholia; he had lost his appetite, and

from being the most contented of men, he had become one of the most irritable.

It is little wonder that the Baroness began to wonder if there might not be some foundation for the scandalous statements of the old busybody she had so uncompromisingly silenced.

"And supposing part of it were true? What could I do?" she asked herself. "If true," she said to herself, "my husband no longer loves me, he prefers another woman to me. : : Can I resign myself? What remedy is there for me?"

The uncertainty was cruel, and was wearing her out to such an extent that she determined to find out the worst, rather than try to live in a fool's paradise occasionally turned into a place of torment by heart-rending doubts.

One day, when her husband had gone for a few days' partridge shooting with a party of friends, the Baroness left her house unattended, and without giving any intimation of her whereabouts to anybody. The unhappy woman climbed the hill leading to the weaver's cottage, and on reaching the semi-closed door, knocked like any ordinary visitor.

Luisita rushed to the door without a moment's delay.

"The Baroness!" exclaimed the girl, dumfounded.

"Yes, it is I."

The Baroness fixed her eyes on the girl with such unflinching purpose that Luisita turned hot and cold in turn, and her emotion was so overwhelming that her beautiful eyes filled with tears.

The girl's loyal heart reproached her for her treachery to her old benefactress, standing before her calm and beautiful like a recording angel pointing to harder but holier ways.

Luisita could not resist her power any longer, and of her own free will, without a single question from the Baroness, she confessed her love for the Baron, and pleaded, not for pardon, but for the punishment she now felt she deserved.

Without saying a word, the Baroness wandered round the squalid apartment where everything was unlovely and denoted abject poverty—the naked walls, the absolute want of comfort, the bed a mere sack of straw lying on rough pine trestles—and her heart felt very full and heavy; and half as a question, half as a soliloquy, she murmured:

"And it is amid this scene of desolation that my husband finds the happiness which I cannot give him!"

No one could have told whether the Baroness was seized with a sudden revulsion of feeling towards her husband, and that her calm was not the stillness that precedes the storm, and that a jealous woman was about to wreak vengeance on another woman because she had been preferred to her.

The sequel, however, points to the fact that women can be as generous, broad-minded, and magnanimous as any martyr ever was.

The Baroness, immediately on her return

home, sent up to the weaver's cottage a comfortable and complete suite of furniture.

We must stop before the impenetrable veil that leaves the scene of the next interview between the Baron and Luisita a few days later, when he returned from the upper Douro and visited her cottage before entering his own house.

All that is known is that the Baron never returned there; after that he seemed stricken with remorse, and could not overcome his feeling of shame, and asked nothing more of life than the pleasure of contemplating the angelic vision he now described in the sweet, calm features of his wronged wife:

THE PRISONERS.

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT. (From the French. Translated by M. Smythe.)

Guy de Maupassant, the most popular short-story writer in France, was born in Normandy in 1850. He carried a musket in the Franco-German War, and at its conclusion settled down to a literary life and soon made a great reputation as a novelist. He eventually became insane, and died in an asylum at the early age of forty-three. Many of his short stories, of which the following is a typical specimen, deal with dramatic incidents connected with the great war in which he himself had taken part.

NOT a sound in the forest, save the rustling of the snow as it fell on the treetops: It had been falling since noon—a fine, powdery snow which sprinkled the branches with an icy foam, which lightly mantled with silver the dead leaves of the brushwood, which spread a white, velvety carpet on the paths, and which accentuated the boundless silence of this vast ocean of trees:

Before the door of the forester's dwelling a young woman, her arms bare to the elbow, was chopping wood with a hatchet on a block of stone. She was tall, slender, strong—a true girl of the woods, daughter and wife of foresters.

A voice called from within the house:

"We are alone to-night, Berthine; you must come in. It's getting dark, and there may be Prussians or wolves about."

"I've just finished, mother," replied the young woman, splitting as she spoke an immense log of wood with strong, deft blows, which expanded her chest each time she raised her arms to strike. "Here I am; there's no need to be afraid; it's quite light still."

Then she gathered up her sticks and logs, piled them in the chimney-corner, went back to close the great oaken shutters, and finally came in, drawing behind her the heavy bolts of the door.

Her mother, a wrinkled old woman, whom age had rendered timid, was spinning by the fireside.

"I'm uneasy," she said, "when your father's not here: Two women are not much good."

"Oh," said the younger woman, "I'd cheerfully kill a wolf or a Prussian if it came to that."

And she glanced at a heavy revolver hanging above the hearth.

Her husband had been called upon to serve in the army at the beginning of the Prussian invasion, and the two women had remained alone with the old father, a keeper named Nicolas Pichon, sometimes called Long-legs, who refused obstinately to leave his dwelling and take refuge in the town.

This town was Rethel, an ancient stronghold built on a rock. Its inhabitants were fired with patriotism, and had made up their minds to resist the invaders, to fortify

their native place, and, if need be, to stand a siege, as in the good old days. Twice already, under Henri IV. and under Louis XIV., the people of Rethel had distinguished themselves by their heroic defence of their town. They would do as much now, by gad! or else be slaughtered within their own walls.

They had, therefore, bought guns and rifles, organised a militia, and formed themselves into battalions and companies, and now spent their time drilling all day long in the square. All—bakers, grocers, butchers, lawyers, carpenters, booksellers, chemists—took their turn at military training, at regular hours of the day, under the auspices of Monsieur Lavigne, a former non-commissioned officer in the dragoons, now a draper, having married the daughter and inherited the business of Monsieur Ravaudan.

He had taken the rank of commanding officer in Rethel, and, seeing that all the young men had gone off to the war, he had enlisted their elders in readiness for an investment of the town. The fat ones now invariably walked the streets at a rapid pace, to reduce their weight and improve their breathing, and the weak ones carried weights to strengthen their muscles.

And they were waiting for the Prussians. But the Prussians did not appear. They were not far off, however, for twice already their scouts had penetrated as far as the forest-dwelling of Nicolas Pichon, called Long-legs.

The old keeper, who could run like a fox, had come and warned the town. The guns had been got ready, but the enemy had not shown themselves.

Long-legs' dwelling served as an outpost in the Aveline forest. Twice a week the old man went to the town for provisions, and brought the citizens news of the outlying district.

On this particular day he had gone to announce the fact that a small detachment of German infantry had halted at his house the day before, about two o'clock in the afternoon, and had left again almost immediately. Their non-commissioned officer spoke French.

When the old man went off thus he took with him his dogs—two powerful animals with the jaws of lions—as a safeguard against the wolves, which were beginning to get fierce, and he left directions with the two women to barricade themselves securely within their dwelling as soon as night fell.

The younger feared nothing, but her

mother was always dreading mishaps, and repeated continually:

"We'll come to grief one of these days: You see if we don't!"

This evening she was, if possible, more nervous than ever.

"Do you know what time your father will be back?" she asked.

"Oh, not before eleven, for certain: When he dines with the commandant he's always late."

And Berthine was hanging her pot over the fire to warm the soup when she suddenly stood still, listening attentively to a sound that had reached her through the chimney.

"There are people walking in the wood," she said—"seven or eight men at least."

The terrified old woman stopped her spinning-wheel, and gasped:

"Oh, mercy! And your father not here!"

She had scarcely finished speaking when a succession of violent blows shook the door.

As the women made no answer a loud, guttural voice shouted:

"Open the door!"

After a brief silence the same voice repeated:

"Open the door, or I'll break it down!"

Berthine took the heavy revolver from its hook, slipped it into the pocket of her skirt, and, putting her ear to the door, asked:

"Who are you?"

"The detachment that came here the other day," replied the voice.

"What do you want?" demanded the young woman.

"My men and I have lost our way in the forest since morning. Open the door, or I'll break it down!"

The forester's daughter had no choice; she shot back the heavy bolts, threw open the ponderous shutter, and perceived in the wan light of the snow six men—six Prussian soldiers, the same who had visited the house the day before.

"What are you doing here at this time of night?" she asked dauntlessly.

"I lost my bearings," replied the officer—"lost them completely. Then I recognised this house. I've eaten nothing since this morning—nor my men either."

"But I'm quite alone with my mother this evening," said Berthine.

"Never mind," replied the soldier, who seemed a decent sort of fellow. "We won't do you any harm, but you must give us something to eat: We are nearly dead with hunger and fatigue."

Then the girl made way. "Come in," she said.

They entered, covered with snow, their helmets sprinkled with a creamy-looking froth, which gave them the appearance of meringues. They seemed utterly worn out.

The young woman pointed to the wooden benches on either side of the large table.

"Sit down," she said, "and I'll make you some soup. You do look tired out, and no mistake."

Then she bolted the door afresh:

She put more water in her pot, added butter and potatoes; then taking down a piece of bacon from a hook in the chimney-corner, cut off half, and slipped it into the pot.

The six men, with hunger in their eyes, watched her movements greedily. They had placed their rifles and helmets in a corner and they waited for supper, as well behaved as children on school-room forms.

The old mother had resumed her spinning, casting from time to time a furtive and uneasy glance at the soldiers. Nothing was to be heard save the humming of the wheel, the crackling of the fire, and the singing of the water in the pot.

But suddenly a strange noise—a sound like the harsh breathing of some wild animal sniffing under the door—startled the occupants of the room.

The German officer made a dart towards the rifles. Berthine stopped him with a gesture, and said smilingly:

"It's only the wolves. They are like you—prowling hungry through the forest."

The incredulous man wanted to see with his own eyes, and as soon as the door was opened he perceived two large, greyish animals disappearing with long, swinging trot into the darkness.

He returned to his seat, muttering:

"I wouldn't have believed it!"

And he waited quietly till supper was ready.

The men devoured their meal voraciously, with mouths stretched to their ears that they might swallow the more. Their round eyes opened in time with their jaws, and the soup, as it coursed down their throats, made a noise like the gurgling of water through a gutter.

The two women watched in silence the movements of the big red beards. The potatoes seemed to be engulfed in these hirsute appendages.

But, as they were thirsty, the forester's daughter went down to the cellar to draw

cider for them. She was gone some time: The cellar was a small, vaulted apartment, which had served, so people said, both as prison and as hiding-place during the Revolution. It was approached by means of a narrow, winding staircase, closed by a trap-door at the further end of the kitchen.

When Berthine returned she was smiling mysteriously to herself. She gave the Germans her jug of cider.

Then she and her mother supped apart, at the other end of the kitchen.

The soldiers had finished eating, and were all six falling asleep as they sat round the table. Every now and then a forehead fell with a thud on the board, and the man, awakened suddenly, sat upright again.

Berthine said to the officer:

"Go and lie down, all of you, round the fire. There's lots of room for six. I'm going up to my room with my mother."

And the two women went upstairs. They could be heard locking their door, and walking about overhead for a time, then they were silent.

The Prussians lay down on the floor, with their feet to the fire, and their heads resting on their rolled-up cloaks. Soon all six snored loudly and uninterruptedly in six different keys.

They had been sleeping for some time when a shot rang out so loudly that it seemed directed against the very walls of the house. The soldiers rose hastily. Two—then three—more shots were fired.

The door opened hastily, and Berthine appeared, barefooted and only half-dressed, with her candle in her hand and a scared look on her face.

"There are the French," she stammered—"at least two hundred of them. If they find you here they'll burn the house down. For Heaven's sake, hurry down into the cellar, and don't make a sound, whatever you do. If you make any noise we are lost."

"We'll go, we'll go," replied the terrified officer. "Which is the way?"

The young woman hurriedly raised the small trap-door, and the six men disappeared one after another down the narrow, winding staircase, feeling their way as they went.

But as soon as the spike of the last helmet was out of sight, Berthine lowered the heavy oaken lid—thick as a wall, hard as steel, furnished with the hinges and bolts of a prison cell—shot the two heavy bolts, and began to laugh long and silently, possessed

with a mad longing to dance above the heads of her prisoners.

They made no sound, inclosed in the cellar as in a strong box, obtaining air only from a small, iron-barred vent-hole.

Berthine lighted her fire again, hung her pot over it, and prepared more soup, saying to herself :

"Father will be tired to-night."

Then she sat down and waited. The heavy pendulum of the clock swung to and fro with a monotonous tick.

Every now and then the young woman cast an impatient glance at the dial—a glance which seemed to say :

"I wish he'd be quick!"

But soon there was a sound of voices beneath her feet. Low, confused words reached her through the masonry which roofed the cellar. The Prussians were beginning to realise the trick she had played them, and presently the officer came up the narrow staircase, and knocked at the trap-door.

"Open the door!" he cried.

"What do you want?" she said, rising from her seat, and approaching the cellar-way.

"Open the door!"

"I won't do any such thing!"

"Open it or I'll break it down!" shouted the man angrily.

She laughed.

"Break away, my good man! Break away!"

He struck with the butt-end of his gun at the closed oaken door. But it would have resisted a battering ram:

The forester's daughter heard him go down again. Then the soldiers came one after another, and tried their strength against the trap-door. But finding their efforts useless, they all returned to the cellar, and began to talk among themselves.

The young woman heard them for a short time, then she rose, opened the door of the house, looked out into the night, and listened:

A sound of distant barking reached her ear. She whistled after the manner of a huntsman, and almost immediately two great dogs emerged from the darkness, and bounded to her side. She held them tight, and shouted at the top of her voice :

"Hallo, father!"

A far-off voice replied :

"Hallo, Berthine!"

She waited for a few seconds, then repeated :

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"Hallo, father!"

The voice, nearer now, replied :

"Hallo, Berthine!"

"Don't go in front of the vent-hole!" shouted his daughter. "There are Prussians in the cellar!"

Suddenly the man's tall figure showed to the left, motionless between two tree trunks.

"Prussians in the cellar?" he asked anxiously. "What are they doing?"

The young woman laughed.

"They are the same ones as yesterday. They lost their way, and I've given them free lodgings in the cellar."

She told the story of how she had alarmed them with her revolver shots, and had shut them up in the cellar.

The man, still serious, asked :

"But what am I to do with them at this time of night?"

"Go and fetch Monsieur Lavigne with his men," she replied. "He'll take them prisoners. He'll be delighted."

Her father smiled.

"So he will—delighted."

"Here's some soup for you," said his daughter. "Eat it quick, and then be off."

The old keeper sat down at the table, and began to eat his soup, having first filled two plates, and put them on the floor for the dogs.

The Prussians, hearing voices, were silent.

Long-legs set off a quarter of an hour later, and Berthine, with her head between her hands, waited.

The prisoners began to make themselves heard again. They shouted, called, and beat furiously with the butts of their muskets against the rigid trap-door of the cellar.

Then they fired shots through the vent-hole, hoping no doubt to be heard by any German detachment which chanced to be passing that way.

The forester's daughter did not stir, but the noise irritated and unnerved her. Blind anger rose in her heart against the prisoners; she would have been only too glad to kill them all, and so silence them.

Then, as her impatience grew, she watched the clock, counting the minutes as they passed.

Her father had been gone an hour and a half. He must have reached the town by now. She conjured up a vision of him as he told the story to Monsieur Lavigne, who grew pale with emotion, and rang his bell for his servant to bring him his arms and

uniform. She fancied she could hear the drum as it sounded the call to arms. Frightened faces appeared at the windows. The citizen-soldiers emerged from their houses half-dressed, out of breath, buckling on their belts, and hurrying to the commandant's house.

Then the troop of soldiers, with Long-legs at its head, set forth through the night and snow towards the forest.

She looked at the clock. "They may be here in an hour."

A nervous impatience possessed her. The minutes seemed interminable. Would the time never come?

At last the clock marked the moment she had fixed for their arrival.

And she opened the door to listen for their approach. She perceived a shadowy form creeping towards the house. She was afraid, and cried out. But it was her father.

"They have sent me," he said, "to see if there is any change in the state of affairs."

"No—none."

Then he gave a shrill whistle. Soon a dark mass loomed up under the trees; the advance guard, composed of ten men.

"Don't go in front of the vent-hole!" repeated Long-legs at intervals.

And the first arrivals pointed out the much-dreaded vent-hole to those who came after.

At last the main body of the troop arrived, in all two hundred men, each carrying two hundred cartridges.

Monsieur Lavigne, in a state of intense excitement, posted them in such a fashion as to surround the whole house, save for a large space left vacant in front of the little hole on a level with the ground, through which the cellar derived its supply of air.

Monsieur Lavigne struck the trap-door with his foot, and called:

"I wish to speak to the Prussian officer!"

The German did not reply.

"The Prussian officer!" again shouted the commandant.

Still no response. For the space of twenty minutes Monsieur Lavigne called on this silent officer to surrender with bag and baggage, promising him that all lives should be spared, and that he and his men should be accorded military honours. But he could extort no sign, either of consent or of defiance. The situation became a puzzling one.

The citizen-soldiers kicked their heels in the snow; beat their shoulders with their arms, as cab-drivers do, to warm themselves; and gazed at the vent-hole with a

growing and childish desire to pass in front of it.

At last one of them took the risk—a man named Potdevin, who was fleet of limb. He ran like a deer across the zone of danger. The experiment succeeded. The prisoners gave no sign of life.

A voice cried:

"There's no one there!"

And another soldier crossed the open space before the dangerous vent-hole. Then this hazardous sport developed into a game. Every minute a man ran swiftly from one side to the other, like a child playing at "touch," kicking up the snow behind him in his flight. They had lighted big fires of dead wood at which to warm themselves, and the figures of the runners were illumined by the flames as they passed rapidly from the camp on the right to that on the left.

Someone shouted:

"It's your turn now, Maloison."

Maloison was a fat baker, whose corpulent person served to point many a joke among his comrades.

He hesitated. They chaffed him: Then, nerving himself to the effort, he set off at a little, waddling gait, which shook his fat paunch, and made the whole detachment laugh till they cried.

"Bravo, bravo Maloison!" they shouted for his encouragement.

He had accomplished about two-thirds of his journey when a long, crimson flame shot forth from the vent-hole. A loud report followed, and the fat baker fell face forward to the ground, uttering a heartrending cry.

No one went to his assistance. Then he was seen to drag himself, groaning, on all fours through the snow until he was beyond danger, when he fainted.

He was shot in the upper part of the thigh:

After the first surprise and fright were over they laughed at him again.

But Monsieur Lavigne appeared on the threshold of the forester's dwelling. He had formed his plan of attack. He called in a loud voice:

"I want Planchut the plumber and his workmen."

Three men approached.

"Take the gutters from the roof."

In a quarter of an hour they brought the commandant thirty yards of leaden piping.

Next, with infinite precaution, he had a small, round hole drilled in the trap-door, then, having a waterway constructed out of the piping from the pump to this opening, he said, with an air of extreme satisfaction:

"Now we'll give these German gentlemen something to drink."

A shout of frenzied admiration, mingled with uproarious laughter, burst from his followers. And the commandant organised relays of men, who were to relieve one another every five minutes. Then he commanded:

"Pump!"

And the pump-handle having been set in motion, a stream of water trickled throughout the length of the piping, and flowed from step to step down the cellar stairs with a gentle, gurgling sound.

They waited:

An hour passed, then two, then three:

The commandant, in a state of feverish agitation, walked up and down the kitchen, putting his ear to the ground every now and then to discover, if possible, what the enemy were doing and whether they would soon capitulate.

The enemy were astir now. They could be heard moving the casks about, talking, splashing through the water.

Then about eight o'clock in the morning, a voice said from the vent-hole:

"I want to speak to the French officer."

Lavigne replied from the window, taking care not to put his head out too far:

"Do you surrender?"

"I surrender."

"Then put your rifles outside."

A rifle immediately protruded from the hole, and fell into the snow, then another, and another, until all were disposed of: And the voice which had spoken before said:

"I have no more. Be quick! We're drowned."

"Cease pumping!" ordered the commandant:

And the pump-handle hung motionless.

Then, having filled the kitchen with armed and waiting soldiers, he slowly raised the oaken trap-door.

Four heads appeared, soaking wet, four fair heads with long, sandy hair, and one after another the six Germans emerged—scared, shivering, and dripping from head to foot.

They were seized and bound. Then, as the French feared a surprise, they set off at once in two convoys, one in charge of the prisoners, and the other conducting Maloison on a mattress borne on poles.

They made a triumphal entry into Rethel.

Monsieur Lavigne was decorated as a reward for having captured a Prussian advance guard, and the fat baker received the military medal in consideration of his having been wounded by the enemy.

✻ ✻ A BOAT FOR SLUMBERLAND. ✻ ✻

*There's a boat that leaves at half past six
From the busy Port of Play,
And it reaches the haven of Slumberland
Before the close of day.*

*It carries the tiniest passengers
And it rocks so gently, oh!
When the wee ones nestle in their berths
And the boatman begins to row.*

*The whistle sounds so low and sweet
(Like a mother's lullaby)
That the travelers smile and close their eyes,
To dream of angels nigh.*

*Sometimes the travelers tarry too long
In the busy Port of Play,
And the anxious boatman coaxes and calls,
And grieves at their delay.*

*But they come at last to the rocking boat
Which bears them down the stream,
And drifts them to the Slumberland—
To rest, and sleep, and dream.*

*The name of the boat is rock-a-bye,
And it's guided by mother's hand;
For she is the patient boatman, dear,
Who takes you to Slumberland.*

*Now, what is the fare the traveler pays
On a rock-a-bye boat like this?
Why, the poorest child can afford the price,
For it's only a good-night kiss!*

The Secret Guest.

By A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK.

CHAPTER I.

The Girl I Ought to Marry.

"YOU are old enough to have made up your mind," Aunt Betty went on, with a touch of severity. "Before he was your age your poor dear Uncle Charles had been married five years and was dead."

It did just occur to me that such an example was not encouraging, but I didn't like to say so.

"I can't live for ever," she added, as if she suspected that I, in my selfishness, might be expecting too much of her; "and if anything happened to me, who's to look after you then, do you suppose? You couldn't look after yourself—of that I'm quite certain."

This was true: I doubt if there is any man of twenty-eight who knows less of domestic affairs than I do, or is less capable, in my aunt's meaning, of looking after himself. But that is scarcely my fault. If anyone is to blame it must be my Aunt Betty herself, who had cared for me and brought me up ever since I was first handed over to her, a lonely little fellow of seven; by which time she, too, was alone, my Uncle Charles having died before I was old enough to make his acquaintance:

My uncle had left her a small income, and being too energetic to settle down to drawing her dividends and vegetating uselessly, she started a select boarding-house in a shabby-genteel square in the neighbourhood of Camden Town.

And there I had lived with her ever since, being alternately pampered and disciplined in my younger years, and subject to a good deal still to her advice and government, though I wonder that, as a staid and responsible bank-clerk, I did not feel that my dignity was compromised by so homely a submission to her authority. I didn't wonder at the time. I have only wondered since—well, since certain amazing experiences that uprooted and re-established me,

as it were, during my fortnight's holiday last year.

But the truth is, my Aunt Betty had a remarkable gift for the management of affairs.

She had had no children of her own, but the maternal instinct seemed so potent in her that she used to treat most of the boarders more as if she were their mother than their landlady. And if she could make the boarders obey her, it is not strange, after all, that I should have been submissive; for they owed her nothing, except a trifle of rent now and then, whilst I owed her everything, and the everything included, of course, my obedience to her within a certain limit.

When she intimated that it was time for me to marry, and even selected my bride, I really considered privately that she was going too far. I was too inured to a custom of obeying her to tell her so plainly, but that was what I thought, and I acted accordingly.

For several months past I had been, as she imagined, consenting to her schemes by my silence, but, with a determination that I felt was creditable to me, I consistently refrained from taking any step towards carrying them out.

"What objection have you got to her?" my aunt resumed presently. "Alice is a sensible girl and a first-rate cook. I have known you both since you were children, Tim, and if ever two people were cut out for each other, it's you two."

"I don't exactly—object to her," I said, with a fleeting regret that one of us had not been cut out on a different pattern, "but I don't *want* to get married yet—not for a very long time."

"You say that every time I speak of her," protested my aunt: "You can never make up your mind, Tim. That is your weakness. You are like your poor Uncle Charles. I know that a man is no good without a wife to look after him, and you are just the sort, if you're left to yourself, to be led into

marrying the wrong woman, one of these days, before you can make up your mind not to, and then you'd regret it till your dying hour. Now, don't have any more shilly-shallying nonsense, but take my advice, my boy, and you'll be happy."

"It is all very well," I temporised feebly, "but suppose Alice objects?"

"Alice will not object," she declared. "Alice's mother and I have been the best of friends all our lives, and it would please her as much as it would me to see you and Alice man and wife."

"But it doesn't follow," I ventured diffidently, "that it would please Alice because it would please her mother."

"I'm surprised at you, Timothy!" exclaimed my aunt. "I don't know what has come over you lately. I am anxious entirely for your own good. You are in a comfortable situation; your prospects are excellent; your income is large enough to begin with; and when I go you will have whatever I have saved, if I see you married to a woman I can trust to take proper care of you, and of your money."

A little quaver thrilled through her voice, and I could not help feeling touched by this evidence of her solicitude for my welfare.

"I don't mind about the money, on my own account," I observed, though I was not actually indifferent to this feature of her argument; "and, of course, if you insist—why, then, if Alice North thinks. : : : But there may be somebody else she cares for!"

"Nonsense! Nothing of the kind!" cried Aunt Betty. "You, with your stubbornness and your objections—you make me fancy, Tim, that it's you that cares for somebody else, and if you do, my boy, say so, and have done with it. I shall never consent, mind! I know the sort of good-for-nothing hussies that generally make fools of such ninnies as you, and I'll see that not a penny of my money is ever thrown away by the likes of her."

"But, my dear aunt," I interrupted, flushing with embarrassment, "I give you my word there is nobody! I am not particularly fond of Alice, but there is no girl that I like better. I can honestly say that much."

"Well, then, my dear boy, we are wrangling over nothing. There is not one reason why you should not obey me, and a hundred good reasons why you should, and I do hope you won't waste any more time. If

you could see Alice and have it settled before you go off on Monday——"

There had been a knock at the front door while she was speaking, and at the sound of a light tread on the stairs, and a pleasant voice questioning the servant, my aunt checked herself and lifted a warning finger.

"Here she is!" she whispered.

* * *

CHAPTER II:

A Secret Confidence.

SHE came in breezily, bright-eyed, vivacious, younger than myself, and not so tall, though she always made me feel the smaller and the junior of the two. I can believe that some people considered her pretty; I daresay she really was; but living within a stone's throw of each other, we had been playmates as children, and ever since she had worn long dresses she had patronised and ordered me about as if I were no more than a convenient little brother. Neither of us was the least bit sentimental, I used to think; we liked each other well enough in a way, but it was not the way that ended in marriage.

"All alone," she cried, "and both of you looking terribly serious! What has Tim been doing now, Mrs. Peffer? I can see you have been scolding him."

"I!" exclaimed my aunt, in derision. "It wants somebody younger to be scolding him nowadays, my dear—he's too old to put up with it any longer from an old woman like I am!"

A curious glance flashed between them, and Alice's face crimsoned.

"I called in with this note from mother," she said, changing the subject. "She wants you to lend her some patterns, Mrs. Peffer."

"Patterns?" murmured Aunt Betty, tearing open the envelope. "Ah, to be sure, I promised to send them, and I forgot."

Presently, on Alice intimating that she must not stay too long, she crossed to the cupboard and was turning over some papers inside it, when she seemed to recollect something, and paused.

"They're not here, of course," she remarked. "I put them away upstairs. Wait a moment, Alice, and I'll fetch them."

Left alone together we were stricken mute by an irritating embarrassment, from which Alice was first to recover.

"What's the matter, Tim?" she demanded impatiently. "You keep peering as if you were frightened of me. I don't bite. Why can't you tell me what you're afraid of?"

"I was simply thinking," I protested. "What is there to be afraid of?"

"Nothing really," she said confidentially. "But you were afraid, Tim, all the same, and I know why, and so do you."

"I don't," I stammered.

"What's the good of us talking nonsense to each other?" she remonstrated. "If you can't trust me, Tim, I can trust you. I guessed what you and Mrs. Peffer had been quarreling about the instant you both looked at me as I came in. I know what she has been saying, because my mother has been saying exactly the same to me for weeks past. They have arranged everything nicely, but I'm sorry we shall have to disappoint them. We are the best of friends, Tim, but you are not in love with me, and I am not in love with you—though you think I am!"

I began to falter a heated denial of this, but with a toss of her head she waved my protestations aside.

"We may as well be frank, Tim. We always used to be," she said. "You are horribly frightened of asking me to marry you, because you take it for granted I shall say 'Yes.' Oh, yes, you do! You think me a plain, unattractive nuisance of a girl, and that if ever you were rash enough to say the word I should snap you up eagerly. But you need not be a bit afraid, for if ever you do ask me I shall say 'No! No! No!'"

She shook her head at me brightly, and with a roguish determination.

"There!" she added. "Now you ought to be quite easy on that score."

But I wasn't. If I looked as I felt, I must have looked extremely awkward and uncomfortable.

"I—I never thought you plain or——"

"Now, don't flatter me, Tim," she laughingly interrupted. "Why, when we were little I wouldn't play with you for a whole week—don't you remember?—because you confessed that you thought I was ugly. You've never thought me the least pretty—and it will surprise you immensely when I tell you there is somebody who believes I am the prettiest girl in the world, and is just madly in love with me, and was dreadfully afraid to tell me so, too—but not because he thought I should say 'Yes!'"

I stared at her blankly.

I was not conscious of any gratification at her news. On the contrary, although I did not love her—or had thought I did not—I perversely resented the notion of anybody else loving her, and of her loving him.

"Who is he?" My tone was involuntarily reproachful. "I never dreamt——"

"Nobody did!" she cried. "I have not told anybody yet but you. It is a secret, and I don't want you to breathe a word about it. I know you won't. You always kept my secrets better than I could keep them myself."

"Who is he?" I reiterated dazedly.

"It's somebody you don't know, and they don't know him at home, either," she said. "Graham agreed with me to say nothing to anyone yet, and you know how I love having a secret! Graham Stanton his name is. He is a civil engineer, and I met him almost by chance—his office is in the same building as mine." Alice was typist to a business firm in the City. "He is the same age as you, Tim. He says he would like to meet you, and I should like to know what you think of him."

Personally I had no desire to meet him; and I knew what I thought of him already.

"But why make any secret of it, Alice?" I demurred. "If he were all you imagine, he wouldn't ask you——"

"He didn't," she hastened to assure me. "It was I who suggested that. It would upset mother, and if there was any objection possible she would make it, because she and Mrs. Peffer have settled their own plans about—about you and me—and they will be awfully angry when it comes out, and it will all be so unnecessary, that I insisted on postponing the evil hour until we were quite, quite ready for it."

"What do you mean by quite ready?"

"Well, just at the moment, Tim, I'm sure father would say that Graham was too poor for anything. But he is really entitled to property enough to make him a very rich man. He only became entitled to it a month ago, and as soon as it has been made over to him—there is some little bother about it—why, then there can be no possible objection to him."

That story of great wealth struck me as distinctly unconvincing, and I intimated as much to Alice.

"You don't know him and are not to say a word against him," she insisted. "You have no right to glare at me, and talk of him in such a voice as that. Why, Tim, if I were

not so certain you are not in love with me," she cried teasingly, "I should fancy you were jealous! I know all about the great wealth, as you call it, and if you'll listen I'll let you know all about it, too, before Mrs. Peffer comes down again."

* * *

CHAPTER III:

Alice's Accepted Lover.

"I WANT you to like him, Tim, and I think you ought to," she went on persuasively, "partly because I like him, and partly because he is more alone in the world than even you are."

"You see, Tim"—she sat forward on the edge of her chair, and sank her voice to more confidential tones—"when Graham's father died he left a rather peculiar will. He had made up his mind that Graham was indolent and sure to go to the bad, so he left all his property to an old friend of his, a farmer in Sussex. Not exactly for good, you know. The farmer was to be Graham's trustee. He was to keep Graham at school till he was twenty-one; then he was to put him to civil engineering, and pay him a small allowance; and he was not to come into what was by rights his inheritance till he had passed his examinations and was a qualified engineer. It was meant as a sort of test; if he did not stick to his work and never became qualified, he would never come into his money, and when he died, it would have belonged to the old farmer, or his descendants altogether."

"But now Graham has fulfilled his father's wishes, and doesn't believe the farmer is pleased about it. I expect he hoped that Graham would turn out a wastrel. He even increased his income; he had no authority to do that, but perhaps he thought that if his allowance was large enough for him to live comfortably he would sooner enjoy himself than work hard."

"For Graham used to hate work; he admits that. He hasn't been such a steady fellow as you have, Tim, but then he has never had anybody to care about him. Only a year or two ago it struck him how silly he was to play into the farmer's hands, so he turned over a new leaf. At first he did it just with the idea of earning his fortune, and not letting the farmer cheat him. Then he met me. But I'm not going to tell you about that."

"I don't know him," I objected, still with a rankling sense that this unknown man

had wronged me. "And if he is already entitled to that great wealth, where's the necessity to go on making a secret of all this?"

"But he hasn't actually got it, and we prefer to wait till he has. 'There's many a slip,' you know. Though I don't see how there can be, unless that horrid old farmer is a downright robber!"

"He wouldn't dare—he could be prosecuted," I suggested:

"Yes, but even the law couldn't get the money back if it was gone," she said. "However, we think it will be all right. The only thing is, though Graham has satisfied him that he is now entitled to his fortune, the farmer has twice made excuses, and put off settling things. Graham wrote to him again the other day, and he replied last night that he would have the accounts prepared and be ready to see him and settle up within a fortnight, and that when Graham goes his father's lawyer shall meet him and attend to his interests. That sounds fair, doesn't it? So Graham will go there for his holiday this year as usual—he has spent his holiday at the farm every year; his father directed that he should—and before he returns to London all these troublesome affairs will be done with and he will be his own master."

I was not so much interested in her narrative as I was absorbed in my personal grievance. I could not get rid of a humiliating feeling that she had slighted me in turning to a man who was practically a stranger and preferring him to myself. It was true, as she said, I had taken it for granted that if I proposed she would unhesitatingly accept me. It seemed the most natural thing for her to do, and I found it difficult to convince myself that she was entirely in earnest, and that while I had been reluctantly resigning myself to the prospect of making her my own for life I had lost her.

"I don't think you have been quite fair to me, Alice," I said sorely. "I think you might have told me of this before now."

"But I've told you first of anybody," she said, apparently anxious to propitiate me. "I would have liked to tell you before, but—somehow I couldn't. It isn't that I am shy—not with you, am I?—but it was not easy to talk about it, especially at first."

She spoke with a certain wistfulness, and I had a vague idea that there were tears in her eyes, but I was sullen, and sat frowning, unappeased.

Aunt Betty joined us before we had time

to arrive at any better understanding, and I daresay she read my chagrin in my face.

She had not found the patterns upstairs, but went to the cupboard again and discovered them there with an ease that did not occur to me as being significant till I reflected on it afterwards.

"Must you be off then, Alice?" cried my aunt. "You can't stay and have tea? Very well, my dear. But Tim will walk back with you—"

"No, no," she protested. "Tim will be busy—he starts on his walking tour on Monday. I may see you at church to-morrow, Tim. If I don't, I hope you will have a good time. Good-bye. Good-bye, Mrs. Peffer."

And she shut the door on us and was gone.

"Well?" said Aunt Betty sharply, after an interval.

"Nothing definite," I said; for I did not intend to betray Alice, and shrank, moreover, from communicating the facts about my own humiliation. "We are leaving it over till—till I come back."

"Now look here, Tim!" She laid aside her sewing, and eyed me sternly. "I shall have to be severe. I've set my heart on this, and I know she's willing—I have talked it over with her mother—and it all rests with you. You are fond of her, but you are selfish, and don't know your own mind. I have other nephews besides you, Tim, and if you are determined to disappoint me, I shall punish you for it. Mark me, now! If you marry Alice I shall leave you my money, as I've told you, for she's not one to fritter it away foolishly, and she will make you happy. But if you don't marry her, not a penny of mine do you get—understand that!—and if you and she are not engaged by the end of the year, I shall provide against accidents by altering my will!"

* * *

CHAPTER IV:

An Unpropitious Meeting.

SO, one way and another, when I set out on my walking-tour, I had plenty to think about. I had much to look back upon that was disturbing; but I had no premonition that not far ahead of me lay much that was more disturbing and even perilous, and that yet, when I returned to London, I should have left behind all the trouble I was carrying away with me.

No premonitions of this came to alarm or console me; I am an unimaginative person, and it has never been my habit to anticipate either happiness or misfortune. I am no dreamer, but just a methodical fellow, with a practical, business spirit, and a good head for figures, so that if there seem any savour of romance in this story, you may depend that the blame or the credit therefor does not rest with me.

When I left the train at Croydon on the Monday morning and started on my tramp southwards, I had no foretaste of coming excitement; I was simply depressed and irritated with thinking of Alice North.

To tell the truth, I was furiously jealous of Graham Stanton. I suppose no one who had been the confidant of Alice, as I had for so many years, could suddenly learn that he had been entirely supplanted by another man, and yet remain indifferent. Anyhow, I couldn't; and I am inclined to think it was the fretting of that irrational jealousy which, as a justification for being jealous, goaded me into a despairing conviction that I was irrevocably in love with Alice myself.

Until then I had never seriously contemplated being in love with her or any girl; and I have not the least doubt that this awakening of the idea of love in me was responsible for certain unpractical sentiments and actions into which I was presently precipitated. I should not otherwise have been capable of them.

Do not misunderstand me, though; I have never regretted that unusual behaviour of mine, and never shall; all I am labouring to impress upon you is that when I set forth that Monday morning I was as commonplace, unromantic a clerk as ever came out of the City, and that in less than a week I had stumbled headlong into a whirling and bewildering romance such as you only expect to find gathering about some dashing hero in an improbable book of adventure.

I did not make much progress the first day. There was no occasion to hurry, and I was in the mood, perhaps, for loitering. At the best of times I am not greatly interested in the beauties of Nature, and that day, beyond a casual glance at finger-posts and mile-stones, I had, most of the time, no more eye for the scenery than if I had been a blind man.

Once, becoming aware that I was hungry, I delayed at a roadside inn for refreshment; and towards dusk I put up at a quiet tavern in Caterham.

In the methodical style that is natural to

me, I had mapped out a tour that should bring me to Brighton at the end of my fifth day's walk; thence I would follow the coast line, and, arriving at Eastbourne on the Monday afternoon, was to have made my return journey along a different route.

Casting off something of my depression after a night's rest at Caterham, I resolved to think no more of my unwonted illusions and disillusion, but to settle down to a sensible enjoyment of my systematically arranged outing, and so far made up for lost time that, after a short stay at Dorking, I got on to Guildford by the Tuesday night; Wednesday saw me at Horsham; Thursday at Lewes; and before Friday evening I entered Brighton.

Indeed, I carried out my programme with scrupulous exactitude, up to a certain point; and I should have gone through with it as scrupulously if I had not been forcibly prevented.

Having spent half of Saturday at Brighton, I pushed on to Rottingdean in the afternoon, purposing to pass the night there, and on Sunday to proceed to Newhaven, whence a few hours' walking would carry me to Eastbourne. But, as a matter of fact, I did not even reach Newhaven.

I strolled into Rottingdean on Saturday evening, and, engaging a room in an unpretentious restaurant, sat in the shop to have tea, thinking to go out afterwards and roam about till bedtime.

During tea, though it is true some passing remembrance of Alice did just flit across my mind, on the whole I was reflecting upon nothing more agitating than the progress I was making—reminding myself how I had arrived at this place and departed from that precisely on the day and at the hour I had previously fixed for such arrival and departure. I have a weakness for method, and it pleased me that I had so rigidly adhered to my plans.

It was with these sober calculations and self-congratulations in my mind that I presently walked out of the restaurant, and, in the most grotesquely absurd manner possible, walked into what turned out to be the one romance of my life.

Straying into the street, stupidly unmindful of the doorstep, I missed my footing, and stumbled and staggered clumsily across the pavement before I could check myself. And so staggering, I blundered against a young girl who had been approaching, and sent a basket flying out of her hand and all

sorts of things flying disreputably out of the basket.

For the moment she was too startled and I too horrified to speak. A single glance shocked me with a lurid vision of broken eggs in the gutter, a leg of mutton shorn of its paper, and lying naked beside them, a brandy bottle shattered in a pool of liquid that had been inside it, with a miscellany of small articles scattered around them.

In the same tense interval, I fancy her stricken glance was scared with the same vision; then, as I looked up at her, she looked up at me, and our eyes met.

CHAPTER V.

A Blow in the Dark.

IF I attempted to give you any idea of my sensations at that moment I should only succeed in making myself ridiculous. I was ashamed and angry with myself; I was acutely conscious of the loss of dignity in which this foolish accident involved me; yet directly I looked into her eyes I forgot everything else.

You have heard of love at first sight, and it is possible you are as sceptical of it as I used to be; but after that bewildering experience in the little street at Rottingdean I, at least, can have no doubt of it any more.

I scarcely knew what I said; I spoke and acted as a man will when he is mesmerised, and my humble, faltering apology seemed to propitiate her at once. She smiled and blushed in a pretty confusion, and before I had made up my mind what I ought to do, I was stooping beside her, helping to restore to the basket whatever was not irretrievably damaged.

"There is the brandy," I said, with a diffident motion of my hand towards the broken glass, "you must please let me get another bottle. And there are the eggs."

She shook her head and demurred, but my healthy common sense was not so near death but that I recognised that she in no way demeaned herself by permitting me to make just amends for my carelessness, and I ventured to insist upon doing so.

As we walked back to the wine shop she owned, half-laughingly, and, as it struck me, by way of explaining her submission to my will, that she had spent all her money, and the brandy was for her father, who would, she was afraid, have been angry if she had gone home without it.

I don't know why I had an instant vision of her father as a raging old ruffian who was brutal to her; but I had. It may have been that there was a tremor in her voice as she said it; or it may have been that she looked such a winsome, gentle little figure, and seemed so much in need of somebody to take care of her. I only know that, glancing at her, I was thrilled with an impulse of protective tenderness, and a longing to guard her against any trouble that could bring tears into her eyes.

When the eggs and the brandy were in the basket again there was no further excuse for me to obtrude my company. I hesitated whether to walk casually on with her, without offering any excuse at all; but my courage was not equal to such an impertinence.

I paused outside the egg shop, and she paused. I reiterated my apologies; my embarrassment so embarrassed her that she could merely murmur timorously that it didn't matter, it was an accident, and I was very kind; and before I could pull myself together, there I was standing dazedly with my hat in my hand, and she was going away from me.

At the end of the street she made as if she would look back, but went on without doing so, and rounded the corner.

My inclination was to follow and speak to her again; but strangely and potently as she had affected me, I was not so much beside myself as to do anything so singular. I was even a little irritated that I could be thus easily shaken from my natural self-control.

Perhaps it was a lack of courage that hampered me, or an excess of courtesy, for I have a stern and straight ideal as to what is and what is not respectable. I walked in the way she had gone, as far as the corner, then I had a glimpse of her firmly-knit, trim little figure already some distance off, along the dusty road to Newhaven, and strolled straight on, and down the slope of the road opposite, to the beach.

By this the sun was set; a fading glow burnt in the sky, the twilight had thickened to a dusky brown, with the stars brightening through it, and far out, here and there, a glimmering of ships' lanterns mast-headed above black lateen sails that were silhouetted against the dull silver of the sea.

I loitered on the lonely shore, and was aware of a subtle magic in the vague sea-voices, in every shadowy sight around me, in the very air I breathed. How else were

my pulses quickened and a madness put into my blood that fired me with extravagant fancies which, at another time, I should have despised in any man?

Strive as I would, bully myself as I might, I could not help thinking of the girl I had met that day for the first and probably the last time. And from troubling me with regret, the reflection that I should continue my journey and never see her again, became intolerable. I had no doubt, from what she said, that she lived somewhere on the road between Rottingdean and Newhaven—it was a long, dismal, solitary road, and there was no knowing how many miles of it she had to travel, or what perils lurking in the darkness might menace her by the way.

It was this fear for her that decided me, by supplying a plausible excuse for hurrying after her. I might tell her it had occurred to me that I had been discourteous in not offering to escort her, seeing it was late and her road was so lonely, and even if she considered such anxiety needless and fussy, she could hardly be displeased by it.

With this sudden resolve I made haste from the beach, returned towards the town, and branched off at a smart pace on the road to Newhaven. If I had not taken my room and deposited my knapsack in it, I would have resumed my tour that night, and so have been armed with a better excuse for my re-appearance when I came up with her. As it was, I could merely rehearse over and over the form of words in which I meant to account for my behaviour; but it was a wasted precaution, for I never overtook her.

There were stars scattered in the blackness overhead, but the moon was buried in a rolling mass of clouds, and the grey road stretched like a dead moonbeam betwixt the vast, dark waste of the Downs and the broad, dark fringe of grass that lay between the road and the edge of the cliffs. It was impossible to distinguish objects at any distance in the gloom, and there was nobody ahead of me, so far as I could see. I pushed on, breaking now and then into a run. The road dipped and rose, and wound this way and that, and as I turned every bend, I felt sure I should see her just before me, but she was never there.

I strode on, past drowsy cottages, past the coastguard station, past ghostly farmsteads huddled far back in the shadowy immensity of the Downs; I met a man in a hooded cart at one point, and a man afoot at another, but I overtook no one anywhere.

Yet I was in such a wildly irrational mood

that I did not abandon hope till I was within sight of the twinkling lights of Newhaven. Then, realising the folly of going on when I had most likely left her behind me in one of the farms or cottages I had passed, I turned to retrace my steps.

Failure and something of weariness were sobering me; I began also to become nervously alive to the weird darkness and unfamiliarity of my surroundings, the bleak, unpeopled silence of the shadowy Downs, and, on the other hand, the hoarse voice of the sea that called ceaselessly from the limitless, blind hollow beyond the invisible edge of the cliffs. At sudden curves of the road, especially where the banks swelled higher and made the way darker, I once or twice clenched my fists and went forward at a run, glancing behind alertly, and prepared for momentary attack.

I heard nothing and saw nothing to alarm me, however, and it was when my nerves were quieted and I was trudging along mechanically, unapprehensive and off my guard, that all of a sudden I was scared by a slight noise, and before I could turn or start aside, there was a horrible crash. I reached out my hands, and staggered, and seemed to fall into illimitable deeps, and so, falling dizzily, lost myself in the depth and the darkness.

* * *

CHAPTER VI:

In the Valley of the Shadow.

WHEN I opened my eyes I could not make out where I was, or remember what had happened, and was too drowsy to think much about it.

After I had lain for some minutes, however, I became aware that I was in pain. It seemed as if I had been numbed, and the numbness were passing; and as the pain asserted itself my heavy senses were spurred into wakefulness, and I began to have a confused apprehension of my surroundings.

I was lying in a thick darkness, and overhead a misty moonlight shone weirdly in through some window or gap in the wall, showing me dim outlines of massive wheels, great beams, and cross-beams, and a grim, inextricable tangle of machinery.

The whole aspect of the place was so strange and sinister, everything in it was distorted and rendered so indefinitely terrible and threatening by the portentous gloom that filled it, and the silence in which it was submerged, that a sickening feeling

crept over me, while fear and a sense of unknown, imminent danger gave me a new energy and roused me.

I was nearly crying out in a frenzy, but restrained myself. Such an outcry might precipitate whatever danger menaced me; my safer course was to keep silent and proceed cautiously, till I knew more of my whereabouts. The fierce pain that tortured me, and that was intensified to an intolerable agony by the slightest touch, did not make this self-control any the easier to maintain; and when I passed my hand shrinkingly over my head and brought it away smeared with a horrible moisture, I was shocked into an instant and vivid realisation of my position.

I had been murderously attacked from behind, out on the highway yonder; but who had attacked me, and why, and where had they brought me?

Raising myself on my elbow, I peered vainly into the darkness. I looked up again at the shadowy wheels and machinery partly revealed in that shimmering moonbeam high above me, and in a flash I guessed that I was in some gaunt, ruinous windmill; I had noticed one far back on the Downs as I went by on the road to Newhaven, and, after a hasty calculation, was pretty certain: I was a prisoner in that identical mill.

But what object could anyone have in imprisoning me? Had they only flung me in, leaving me for dead, and if I groped round and reached the door should I find it unfastened and no one to oppose my escape? My watch and money were safe in my pockets, so whatever object my assailants had, it could not have been robbery.

While I was thus cogitating I became sensible of a thin, persistently recurring sound that fretted the silence. For a while, I heard it, as it were, without hearing—a sound with a curious, soft click and scrape in it, that grew on my attention, and, by degrees, assumed significance to me. Somebody near by was digging.

Turning towards the sound, I listened and stared till the darkness was mitigated by a narrow slit of greyness, that I took to be the lesser darkness of the night filtering through from without. With tremulous caution I moved in that direction, and presently, getting to my feet, felt the air cool on my face, and found I was at a small, unglazed window.

If there were any comfort in seeing the gleam of the sky again, there was none in gazing out on the miles of lonely upland that stretched ghostly under the cloudy

moon, or on the grim, grotesque shadow of the windmill that lay black on the earth immediately below me.

There was something moving in that shadow of the mill, and as my eyes became used to the darkness, I made out the figures of two men; and it was these who were digging. They stood one at each end of a long hole in the ground, and were shoveling the soil up with a mechanical and businesslike regularity.

They worked industriously, and, for a time, without speaking. Then the man I took to be the younger, because of his slighter build and greater activity, leant on his spade and asked in a husky whisper:

"Isn't that deep enough?"

"No," growled the other, without pausing: "Think I'm going to run risks of having it turned up at the next ploughing!"

"It's bound to come out. These things always do. We'd better have lost everything—I wish to Heaven we'd never done it!"

"You talk like a fool! What would have happened if it hadn't been done?" the elder man spoke angrily, but without raising his voice. "As for its being found out, so long as we keep our mouths shut it's impossible."

"I don't know that. It would have been safer to throw it over the cliff as I wanted you to."

"Yes," sneered the other, "and have it brought ashore by the tide to-morrow, so that they could see he hadn't died by drowning. If they find no body, how can they prove that anything happened to him, and if we put him deep enough, what clue is going to lead them to burrow here—in this particular six feet out of all the miles he might be buried in? If you're frightened——"

"I'm not, but I'm not anxious to get into a mess over it, I can tell you that!"

"Neither am I, and I don't mean to." The elder man stepped down into the hole, and went on digging: "Nobody has seen us, and nobody can guess——"

"Perhaps not, so far, but we might be seen here any minute, and——"

"Bah! Who's going to see us? Who's out on the Downs this time of night, and how many are likely to be on the road? And with the mill betwixt us and the road, and we in the shadow of it—don't stand babbling like an idiot, come and help me, and whatever danger there may be we shall be out of it all the sooner."

I knew well enough now the object of their digging; it was impossible for the dullest man to be longer in doubt; and in the light of this dreadful knowledge, I reviewed my chances swiftly, and saw that my only hope lay in flight. They were reckless and resolute; for some reason I could not fathom they were bent upon taking my life, and I could expect no mercy. I was too weakened to face them in a struggle with the least prospect of success; and so far out in that vast solitude no outcry I might make would reach the ears of any who could come to my assistance.

My only chance was to grope for the door, and, if it were not locked, to run for it. I was so feeble that if they saw me and pursued, I must inevitably be overtaken, but I must risk that; there was no other way:

I was stepping quietly away, intent on this forlorn scheme, when the younger man spoke again:

"I s'pose it did settle him?"

"Oh, yes. I gave him the second one to make certain. If he isn't a dead 'un now he never will be."

"You never know——"

"Oh, don't yer! He knows, and so do I," said the elder man grimly, "and if there's any doubt about it, there won't be after I've got him in here with a sack of quicklime on top of him."

"You can't be too careful——"

"Look here, m'lad," interrupted the other, with an oath, "if you ain't satisfied, go in and see for yerself. Don't stand shivering and chattering there. Go in and see if I haven't settled him, and if I haven't, I soon will. Go on! You're not afeered, are yer?"

"Afeered! Course I'm not. I only said——"

"Never mind. Don't say no more. Just you go in and see that he's all right, and no mistake. No harm in being certain. Go on now, or do you want me to go myself?"

CHAPTER VII:

A Run for Life.

THERE was no time to think; any hesitation must have been fatal.

I stepped back almost involuntarily, lay down, as nearly as I could calculate, on the spot and in the position in which I had found myself when I regained

consciousness, closed my eyes, set my features as rigidly as might be, and waited.

He did not keep me waiting. I heard a heavy tread without, and a rush of air told me that the door had been pushed open. The door was evidently in the side of the mill opposite to that on which they were digging, and this, I felt, was an important point in my favour, if I only came successfully through the ordeal that was impending.

I dare not open my eyes even sufficiently to peer under the lids. The heavy tread sounded lingeringly on the floor, and stopped. Then a match was struck, and I feared that, if he stooped and held the light near, the contraction of my eyelids would betray me; but apparently he did not come close enough for that. He remained at a little distance critically surveying me, I imagine, by such glimmer as the match gave him.

I must have acted my part with a convincing realism, and either I had been lucky in replacing myself exactly as they had laid me, or he was too nervously agitated to note any difference; for, having struck a second match, he withdrew, pulling the door to after him.

I did not venture to stir till the murmur of voices satisfied me of his whereabouts; then I stepped across to the door; I knew pretty well where it was now, and found it without difficulty; and the next moment I was out in the open, running, with the crazy old windmill rising as a screen between me and the murderous wretches who believed me to be stretched dead inside it.

Nothing sustained me but the excitement that quickened my nerves, and made me insensible to pain and alive only to the peril from which I was flying. I trembled from very weakness, as I ran; again and again I staggered and thought I should have fallen headlong, but each time, with a desperate effort, recovered myself and went panting on.

As often as I faltered a flitting vision of the death that was at my heels flogged me to fresh and superhuman energy. In my fancy, I heard the patter of pursuing feet; yet, for all my panic, I had the sense to run softly, till I had gone well beyond possibility of their hearing me: I had the sense, too, not to make straight for the highway, for I reckoned that directly they missed me they would assume that I had fled along the main road and go that way in chase of me.

I shall remember that frantic flight to the day of my death; it is past my power to describe it adequately, though it is one of

the few incidents of my life that have taken hold upon me, and will not be forgotten. It seemed all as wildly real as a nightmare, and I have gone through it since, many a time, in dreams, and wakened bathed in perspiration and shaking with the violence of my terrors.

Avoiding the highway, and shaping my course across the treeless Downs, I saw ahead of me, by-and-by, a group of farm buildings huddled about a solitary farmhouse that had still a light shining from one of its lower windows. It was a haven of refuge; the very nearness of this sign of waking life and human habitation calmed me with an exultant feeling of safety, and for the first time I ventured to look back.

The old mill stood dimly hooded in the shadows nearly a mile behind, and between me and it the ground was clear of any figure flitting in pursuit. But with this feeling of security and the lessened need for exertion, my strength suddenly deserted me, and I reeled, and stumbled, and fell helplessly.

I was near swooning, and inclined to let myself go, but at the back of my mind strove a consciousness of the folly of doing so here, when a few more paces would carry me effectually beyond the grasp of my pursuers. So it was merely a momentary lapse; I recovered myself, got to my feet again, and struggled feebly and unsteadily forward till I was at the door of the house.

I knocked, and waited, and knocked, but no one came.

Then, in a sudden fever of fear, I hampered with both fists, using all the strength that remained to me, and this time I was heard.

It was a young girl who opened the door to me, and as she stood looking out, with the candle she carried lifted above her head, I saw her face blanch and a startled look leap into her eyes, for with the blood on my hands and staining my features, I must have presented a ghastly and alarming spectacle. Despite my altered and fearsome appearance, though, she recognised me; and dazed and half-fainting as I was, I knew her again at a glance as the girl I had met so oddly at Rottingdean a couple of hours or so ago.

I suppose I stammered out some incoherent explanation of my condition and the peril from which I was escaping; but my brain was in a whirl, my voice failed, and the very words I needed evaded me.

I don't know how I made her understand me; I don't know in what rambling, broken

sentences I appealed to her. I have but a hazy recollection of begging her to save me, of entreating her to let me come in, of urging her to bar the door against those ruffians who were coming after me. I have a chaotic recollection of breaking down utterly, at sight of her, in some such hysterical fashion, and then, as she reached her hand out to help me, I forgot everything, and sank unconscious at her feet.

* * *

CHAPTER VIII.

In the Enemy's Camp.

I AM trying to recall this adventure of mine and to relate it plainly and without exaggeration. If it has some colour of romance about it, then it must be inherently romantic, for I have no gift in that direction, and am, by nature, disposed to tone down its proper colouring, rather than to heighten it.

As I have mentioned before, I am not in the least romantic, and I never felt less so, and probably never looked less so, than when I revived and gazed dreamily round the dim little sitting-room in which I found myself, and, with a reviving thrill of pleasure, up into the eyes of her who was solicitously bending over me.

I was lying, limp and lifeless, in a low, deep arm-chair. She had evidently carried me through from the hall into this room; her slight figure did not look to have strength for such a task, but I gave no thought to that at the moment.

My glance strayed idly over the solid, sombre furniture that crowded the place, to the candle that glimmered from the table, to the basin, and scissors and lint that were grouped beside it, and so back to her face, and the sweet, serious eyes that were anxiously regarding me. She had bathed my wound, and my head was carefully bandaged. There was a flavour of brandy in my mouth, and in her hand was the glass she had been holding to my lips.

It was surprising how far away and strange my voice sounded, and what an effort it cost me to make myself audible when I tried to thank her and express my regret at occasioning her so much trouble.

"I did not know you lived here," I assured her. "It was the merest accident that led me to your door. This was the first house I came to—and I saw a light in the window."

She knelt to bring herself to my level, and spoke in an undertone, as if to avoid the chance of being overheard.

"I am glad you came," she said simply, "and please don't think I mind the trouble, I am only sorry it—it has been necessary."

I saw in her eyes and heard in her tones that she was keenly distressed, and if I fancied too readily that it was on my account, it was not long before I learnt that I was egregiously mistaken.

"I do not quite understand how this happened to you," she went on. "Do you feel able to tell me? I am not asking out of curiosity—I would not do that. But there are reasons—very special reasons—why I want to know, if—if you feel that you can tell me."

This acute interest in me and my misfortune did not seem untimely or strange. I told her briefly, and not without self-compassion, since I was naturally sorry for myself, how I had been struck down in the darkness out on the highway, and how, coming to myself, I found I was lying in the disused windmill on the Downs, and from a window there had seen the two men digging my grave.

"It was the mill not far from here—the one within sight of our door?" she questioned me, too eager to arrive at the facts to waste time or words in expressing the horror she must have felt. "And the two men—should you know them again?"

"I don't know. I didn't see their faces," said I, "but as well as I could judge from what I saw of them, I should say one was an elderly man, and the other perhaps somewhere about my age."

"I can't understand—I don't know what to think!" she faltered distractedly. "It seems impossible. What reason could they have had for it?"

"None that I am aware of," I said. "They have not robbed me. All I am sure of is that they were determined to have my life, and my escape was little short of a miracle. The whole affair is as much of a mystery to me as I can see it is to you."

Her pretty face was clouded; she was looking away from me, and so absorbed in troubled thought that she scarcely seemed to heed what I was saying.

"I am afraid—I am afraid to tell you what I think," she began presently, in agitated whispers. "I have no right to tell you—I may be terribly wrong. Oh, I hope I am! I hope I am!" She clasped her hands against her breast, and, checking herself,

flashed a scared glance towards the door and listened, as if she fancied she detected the sound of approaching steps. "You should not be here—it would have been better if you had not come here," she went on excitedly, but without raising her tone. "Do you feel able to go on—now—to-night? It is not much more than a mile to the next farm. Are you strong enough to walk as far as that?"

I stared at her aghast. Her obvious alarm disquieted me, and I believe I was even foolishly hurt that she should appear so unaccountably desirous of being rid of me.

"I'm very sorry," I faltered, "but I'm so miserably weak, I feel too done up to go a step further to-night. Look at me!" I threw out my hands appealingly. "I've no strength left. But, of course, I have no right to intrude on you, and if you wish me to go——"

"No, no, it is not that," she interrupted tearfully. "I would sooner you stayed, but for your own sake—— Oh, but I may be all mistaken! I don't know what to do, but I am afraid you are not safe here, and that is why——"

"But," I hastened to point out to her, "surely I am safer here, anyhow, than out of doors! They are searching for me, and if I went out, I might meet them, or they might overtake me, and I should be powerless. What could I do, in my state, to defend myself?"

"I would come with you and see you in safety. They dare not touch you if I were with you and away from here. But here, in this house—— Oh, I don't know!" She covered her face with her hands, as if in an effort to shut out the very thought of something. "You cannot understand, and I must not say what I only suspect—it seems so terribly impossible."

(Next month's instalment will be a most thrilling one.)

I was silent with sheer perplexity.

She was overwrought, I told myself; the ghastly sight of me at the door, the tending to my wounds and winning me back to consciousness must have been a severe strain, and now that the worst was over she was relaxing her brave self-restraint and giving way to a natural womanly weakness. My startling experience had unnerved her, and she was frightening herself and me, too, with extravagant fancies of new and direr perils that had no real existence.

Nevertheless, whether I were right or wrong in this supposition, I was bound, in mere courtesy, to act as she considered best, or at least to make the attempt.

"If you would rather I went," I said, "and if you will please help me——"

But she caught suddenly at my arm, and motioned me to be still.

Somebody was opening the outer door of the home; there was a sound of footsteps in the hall, and they passed thence into the kitchen, to which one of the two doors in my room gave access.

"Hush! Don't let them hear you," she whispered. "Stay here till I come back."

With that she rose, took the candle from the table, slipped out into the hall, and closed the door on me noiselessly, leaving me in pitch darkness.

"Where's Doris?" growled one of the arrivals in the next room. "I told her to sit up for us."

It was an oddly rasping voice, and the sound of it almost stunned me with apprehension, for I recognised it at once as that of the elder of those two men whom I had seen preparing my grave. I was here under the same roof with them; shielded from them only by the thickness of a wall!

TIME AND LOVE.

*Sly old Time took little Cupid,
Tied a 'kerchief o'er his eyes;
Turned him round, exclaiming: "Stupid,
Tell me where your true love lies."
Long as moon shall shine above,
Time will play his tricks on Love.*

*Cupid, of his power reminded,
Showed old Time what he could do;
And that, though his eyes were blinded
Yet his heart would lead him true.
Long as suns the heavens shall climb,
Love will foil the tricks of Time.*

An Interrupted Proposal.

By ARLO BATES.

Amateurs will derive great amusement from the performance of this farcical comedy. Applications for permission to act it must be made to The Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, W.C.

CHARACTERS :

STEPHEN HOWARD (a practical joker).
SAMUEL TRACY (his friend).
THOMAS STONE (a prosperous merchant).
MRS. STONE (his wife).

HELEN STONE, (their daughter).
MRS. RAMSEY (their next-door neighbour).
MARY (a maid).

The scene is the drawing-room of Mr. Stone's house. At the back of the stage is a window hidden by long curtains coming to the floor. Ordinary furnishings of a well-to-do merchant's house. In the centre of the room is a table, on which are a lamp, books, and a photograph of Helen in a frame. On each side of the table is an easy-chair. When the curtain rises MR. and MRS. STONE are discovered seated in these, he reading a paper.

MRS. STONE : Will you put down that paper and listen to me ?

MR. STONE : Hey ? Oh, yes, my dear ; in a minute.

MRS. STONE : No ; now. Helen may come in in a minute.

MR. STONE : Well, well ; what is it ?

MRS. STONE : You needn't get into a temper.

MR. STONE : Was that what you wanted to say ?

MRS. STONE : No ; I wanted to tell you to go to bed.

MR. STONE : Go to bed ? Why, it's only about eight o'clock.

MRS. STONE : I don't care if it's only seven. Mr. Tracy's coming, and I want him and Helen to have this room.

MR. STONE : Have this room ? What for ?

MRS. STONE : To sit in, of course.

MR. STONE : Isn't there room enough for me to sit here, too ?

MRS. STONE : How stupid you are ! When you came to court me did you want my father and mother in the same room ?

MR. STONE : Is he courting Helen ?

MRS. STONE : He's simply wild to have her.

MR. STONE : But I thought she—

MRS. STONE : Oh, you're thinking of that man at the seaside last summer, who pulled her out of the water.

MR. STONE : He saved her life.

MRS. STONE : Well, what if he did ? He never proposed.

MR. STONE : Never proposed ? Humph !

You seem to think proposing to a girl is more important than saving her from drowning.

MRS. STONE : Well, it is, isn't it ? And it's twice as brave.

(Enter MARY.)

MARY : Please, mum, Mrs. Ramsey wants to know if you can see her for a minute.

MRS. STONE : Of course. Ask her to come in. (Exit MARY.) Well, anyway, Helen's got to have a chance, and I want you to go to bed as soon as Mrs. Ramsey leaves. I hope she'll have the sense not to stay long. That's the worst of knowing people next door—you never can tell when they'll come running in.

MR. STONE : Hush ! She'll hear you.

(Enter MRS. RAMSEY.)

MRS. STONE : Oh, Mrs. Ramsey, this is really neighbourly of you. I'm delighted to see you. Do take this chair.

MRS. RAMSEY : Thank you so much ; but I can't stop a minute.

MRS. STONE : Do take off your mantle, and stay for a little. I was just telling my husband that though we live next door we never see you. I hope now you've come for a good, long evening.

MRS. RAMSEY : Oh, no ; I just came in to see if you could lend me one of Mr. Stone's old hats.

MR. STONE : One of my old hats ?

MRS. RAMSEY : I knew you'd think it was funny.

MRS. STONE : But what do you want with an old hat ?

MRS. RAMSEY : Why, my nephew—I'm

awfully sorry you never met my nephew, Mrs. Stone—I know you'd like him—he's so full of fun. He's been talking to me about burglars, and about having no man in the house; and I thought I'd have a hat to hang in the hall so a burglar could see it.

MRS. STONE: What a good idea.

MR. STONE: But how could he see a hat in the dark?

MRS. RAMSEY: Oh, I never thought of that! I'll have to leave the gas burning.

MR. STONE: That'll be expensive.

MRS. RAMSEY: You wouldn't have me murdered in my bed just for the price of a little gas, would you?

MR. STONE: But I don't believe—

MRS. STONE: There, Tom, you get the hat.

MRS. RAMSEY: Any sort of hat will do. (Exit MR. STONE.) My nephew's a terrible joker, and I dare say he was just trying to frighten me for the fun of it; I shouldn't be surprised any time to have him break into the house himself, just for a joke.

(Re-enter MR. STONE with hat.)

MR. STONE: Will this do?

MRS. RAMSEY: Oh, that'll do splendidly. Thank you so much; I'll run home at once and hang it up. It'll be a great comfort to me. Good-night.

MR. and MRS. STONE: Good-night.

(Exit MRS. RAMSEY.)

MRS. STONE: Thank goodness she didn't stay! Now come; we must leave this room quickly.

MR. STONE: I think it's a pity I can't be allowed to read my newspaper in peace.

MRS. STONE: Oh, you can read it some other time. Helen's got to have her chance.

(She takes him by the arm and leads him out. A brief pause and then HOWARD enters stealthily. He wears his hat as if just in from the street, and carries a silver-basket evidently well filled. He puts the basket on a chair, rubbing his hands and chuckling.)

HOWARD: Well, of all the larks! To think that when I only meant to take a short cut through the lane, I should find Aunt Tabby's back door open! Just the very day I'd been telling her to look out for burglars, too! Hark! Humph! I'm a regular Macbeth, starting like that. I thought I heard a man's voice somewhere. A man at Aunt Tabby's would be funny. And all the silver in a basket on the dining-room table ready to be carried off. Oh, I'll never let Aunt Tabby hear the last of it. Where'd I better hide it? (Looks about and evidently begins to be astonished. Then

he catches sight of the picture on the table and takes it up in greater amazement than ever.) Great Scott! What's this! My hat! It's the girl I saved at the seaside last summer, and had to go off without meeting on land. How did Aunt Tabby get that? I wonder why I never saw it? What has Aunt Tabby done to her room! I never saw that—where in thunder am I? By the great jumping Jehoshaphat! I'm in the wrong house! (Sound within.) There's somebody coming! And I've got the silver-basket! (Looks round desperately, then catches up the basket and rushes behind the curtains at the back. Enter TRACY, shown in by MARY.)

MARY: Please take a seat, sir. Miss Stone will be down directly. (Exit.)

TRACY: Well, I'm in for it. I hope I don't look as I feel. I wonder if every man, when he is going to propose, feels as if he'd been caught running away with the family silver. It's queer that my knees should feel shaky just because I'm going to say a few words with my tongue. They haven't got to do the proposing, and might at least hold me well together while I do the job. I only hope the girl that's being proposed to feels as nervous as the man, for in that case Helen won't notice. I wish I were sure how she does feel. Her mother said she would have me, but Mr. Stone blurted out something one night about that fellow she saw last summer who saved her life. She hasn't seen him since; that's one comfort.

(Enter HELEN.)

HELEN: How do you do, Mr. Tracy?

TRACY: I'm very well, thank you, Miss Stone. I came to—oh, excuse me. How do you do?

HELEN: I'm always well, thank you. Won't you be seated?

TRACY: Thanks. It's—it's rather cold for the season; don't you think so?

HELEN: Oh, not very. Besides, I like cold weather.

(As soon as Tracy and Helen are seated

HOWARD sticks his head out between the curtains. Whenever Tracy turns; or afterwards goes towards the window, HOWARD draws his head in quickly. This business is repeated with each mention of the window.)

TRACY: You're right; it isn't very cold. Don't you think the room is rather warm, if you'll pardon my saying so?

HELEN: You might open the window.

TRACY (going towards the window, but

turning back without touching the curtains): I'm afraid it would be too cold for you.

HELEN: Thank you, I shan't mind it in the least. (*He approaches window.*) Only I wouldn't open it too much, for the wind is that way.

TRACY (*coming back and sitting down again*): I think I won't open it.

HELEN: Perhaps it's just as well.

TRACY: I dare say the trouble's with me instead of with the room, anyway.

HELEN: I hope there is nothing the matter with you.

TRACY: Oh, no; only, I may as well own I'm a little nervous.

HELEN: Nervous? Why should you be nervous?

TRACY: Well, you see, when a man has made up his mind to say something that may change his whole life, he naturally is a little shaky about it.

HELEN: Then I should think he'd better not say it.

TRACY: Oh, faint heart ne'er won fair lady. (*He bends forward to take her hand. She pretends not to notice and lifts her hand to arrange her picture on the table beside which she is sitting. He recovers himself, but becomes more uneasy.*)

HELEN: How funny those old proverbs are. I don't think they mean much.

TRACY: That's a beautiful picture of you.

HELEN: Thank you. As you were saying, we're having a very mild winter.

TRACY: Yes, we certainly are; but I wanted to say—

HELEN: We've had so little snow.

TRACY: Very little. I must ask you—

HELEN: It will make the winter seem very short.

TRACY: Yes; I think I might open the window a little. (*He rises, and moves a step towards the window.*)

HELEN: Don't open it so wide that it will blow on the lamp.

TRACY: I didn't think of that. It's better shut. (*Returns to seat.*) I'm a fool, but I'm afraid to say what I came to say.

HELEN: I hope you're not afraid of me.

TRACY: I am, though, awfully.

HELEN: I didn't know I was so awe-inspiring.

TRACY: Oh, you're not. You are too charming. That's just the trouble.

HELEN: Have you been skating lately?

TRACY: No; there hasn't been any skating.

HELEN: Oh, no, there hasn't. Isn't it funny how—

TRACY: Miss Stone—Helen—I—you must have seen—

HELEN (*rising quickly and going to table at side of room for photograph*): Oh, that reminds me. I want to show you a picture I've just got. Clare Perkins has sent it to me. She took it last summer at the seaside.

TRACY: It's very pretty; but I can't be interested in pictures, Miss Stone, when I want to ask you to marry me.

HELEN: I wouldn't ask that, if I were you.

TRACY: Why not?

HELEN: We're such good friends, it's a pity to spoil it.

TRACY: Spoil it? How does that spoil it?

HELEN: Why, of course, I can't marry you, Mr. Tracy; and it's so awkward to talk about such things.

TRACY: Why can't you marry me?

HELEN: Oh, don't let us talk about it.

TRACY: I know what the trouble is. There's some other fellow.

HELEN: What nonsense! Of course there isn't.

TRACY: It's probably that man who pulled you out of the water last summer. I didn't suppose you were so romantic!

HELEN: I'm not romantic.

TRACY: And you don't even know his name.

HELEN: Then, of course, I couldn't be in love with him.

TRACY: But he saved your life.

HELEN: I couldn't help that, could I?

TRACY: But you're in love with him. I'm sure of it. What beastly luck some fellows have. Why couldn't I have had his chance?

HELEN: But he was so splendidly brave! The way he jumped into the water just as he was! I shall remember him till I die!

(*Demonstrations of delight from HOWARD.*)

Much depends upon doing well and not overdoing the pantomime and facial expression of HOWARD through this entire scene. During the following speeches his pleasure gives place to disgust and anger.

TRACY: Some people have all the luck. Steve Howard saved a girl somewhere last summer, and he says she was the handsomest creature he ever laid eyes on.

HELEN: Steve Howard? Who is he? Is he handsome?

TRACY: Oh, not at all. Very ordinary-looking chap.

HELEN: Has he very nice eyes?

TRACY: I should say his eyes were the ordinary common or garden kind.

HELEN: Then he couldn't be the man who rescued me.

TRACY: Rescued you? Of course not. But, Miss Stone—Helen, isn't there any hope at all—

(MARY rushes in, screaming.)

MARY: Oh, murder! Thieves! Burglars!

HELEN: What's the matter?

MARY: The silver! All the silver's stolen!

HELEN: Stolen!

MARY: I left it on the dining-room table in the basket, and it's gone.

TRACY: But how could a burglar get in at this time of night?

MARY: It's all the fault of the cook. She went into the lane with her feller, and left the door open:

TRACY: Is there any clue for the police?

(HOWARD advances from between the curtains holding basket.)

HOWARD: It won't be necessary to give the police a clue. Here's the silver.

(HELEN screams. MARY runs out of the room.)

TRACY: Steve Howard! How in the name of wonder did you get here, and what are you doing?

HOWARD: Making a fool of myself, and hearing what you think of me.

HELEN: Why, it's the man at the seaside!

TRACY: The man at the seaside? The man who saved you?

HELEN: To think this is the way I should see you next!

HOWARD: Oh, do let me explain. It was only a stupid joke.

TRACY (bitterly): Yes, I should say it was stupid enough; but I can see that this is no place for me. Miss Stone, I wish you good-evening. (Bows and exit.)

HELEN (stiffly): And now, Mr. Howard—your friend called you Howard, I think?—perhaps you will be good enough to explain what this means?

HOWARD: You have every right to be offended, Miss Stone; but I had so often hoped to find you, that it's hard to have you speak to me like that.

HELEN: You can't expect a girl to speak very warmly to a man who is caught trying to make off with the family silver.

HOWARD (putting down basket and coming towards her): Of course, it must seem extraordinary. I thought I was in the house of my aunt, who lives next door. I meant to play her a joke, and I've only made you angry.

HELEN: Oh, I'm not angry. I'm only—only surprised.

HOWARD (taking her hand): If you only knew how I've thought of you, dreamt of you, hoped to find you—

(Enter MR. and MRS. STONE in dressing-gowns, much agitated.)

MRS. STONE: Oh, my darling, has he killed you? Where is the burglar? Just let me get at him! I'll teach him to rob defenceless women and children!

MR. STONE: Yes, yes; just let your mother get at him! He'll see whether she's defenceless!

HELEN: There isn't any burglar, mother. This is my friend, Mr. Howard. We met at the seaside last summer—in the water.

MRS. STONE: It isn't the man who saved you from drowning, is it?

HELEN: Yes, mother.

MRS. STONE: Noble young man, how can a mother thank you? (Grasps hand.)

HOWARD (much embarrassed): Oh, I beg you won't mention it. I'd be glad to do it again any time, if you'll let me know.

MR. STONE: Shake hands, young fellow; we'll call for you every time Helen's in danger of drowning.

HELEN: How silly you are, father! (She turns to her mother, and says aside): Mother do you realise how you and father look?

MRS. STONE: Good gracious! I forgot! Mr. Howard, I hope you'll excuse us. That silly Mary declared there were burglars in the house.

MR. STONE: Oh, Mr. Howard won't mind my looks. Now I'm here I'll just have another look at that paper.

MRS. STONE (aside, taking him by the arm): Come out of here this minute. Can't you see that this time Helen's really got a chance? (Aloud): Good-night, Mr. Howard. I hope we shall see you often.

(She leads her husband out, he remonstrating.)

HOWARD: I can only apologise once more, Miss Stone. I've been trying to find you ever since I had to go away last summer without knowing you, and here I've made such a fool of myself that you'll never want to see me again.

HELEN: Won't you sit down? We might talk it over.

HOWARD: And you'll forgive me for alarming you so?

HELEN: Here's my hand on it:

(He takes her hand, holds it a minute gazing at it; then he looks up into her face, and as she droops her head he stoops and kisses her hand.)

CURTAIN.

The Honourable Betty.

By JEAN HOME.

In which the fickleness of Fortune is responsible for some strange happenings.

SHE was driving briskly along in a small yellow dog-cart drawn by a roan cob, and was just about the prettiest picture of a happy English country girl anyone might wish to see.

Some distance along the road the girl passed a wayfarer pursuing the same course as herself. He was a tall, thin man, and before she overtook him her keen eyes noticed how the threadbare coat clung pitifully round his angular shoulders, how his boots were bursting out, and his hat caving in. He seemed to walk with difficulty; should she offer him a lift? But as he made no sign of noticing her as she passed she drove on without speaking.

About ten minutes later the sky became overcast and presently there was a down-pour, and the girl quickly drew up under the shelter of some bushy trees. As the shower promised to last several minutes she took out of her pocket a small book, and apparently forgot all about the rain in its perusal, for it was not until the clouds broke and the sun came out that she was aware of its cessation. Gathering up the reins, she was just about to start, when an educated voice accosted her:

"Excuse me, but is this the Hedley Road?"

Turning round, she was surprised to find in her interlocutor the man she had passed some minutes before.

"Yes," she replied with a smile, and was about to ask him if he would have a lift when he said "Thank you," and turned quickly away.

She sat watching him with a puzzled expression on her face. "I believe he's a gentleman," she said to herself. He shambled along the road with an erect head strangely out of keeping with the rusty clothes and shabby boots.

"I will ask him," she said again to herself, and in a second or two had drawn up beside him. "Are you going to Hedley? If so, let me offer you a lift; it is rather showery weather, and you have no umbrella."

A pang shot through the man's heart at

the kindly speech and the delicate excuse for making it. "I am greatly obliged," he replied with a catch in his voice, as he mounted into the vacant seat by her side. "As you say, I have no umbrella, and very soon shall have no shoes either," and he laughed sardonically.

"Oh, there are plenty of shops at Hedley," she remarked, bent upon ignoring his destitute condition. "I am bound upon a shopping expedition myself this afternoon."

During the drive the man had three or four bad attacks of coughing, which seemed almost to shake him to pieces, and left him very breathless.

"How bad your cough is," she said.

"Yes," he replied; then, after a pause, feeling he ought to give some explanation of himself, he remarked: "I am on my way to Liverpool to catch an American steamer."

"I suppose you are going to take the Liverpool express at Hedley?" she said with friendly interest.

"No," he replied, in a matter-of-fact voice, "I'm going to walk."

"Walk!" she exclaimed in a horrified tone. "Why, it is miles and miles; you won't get there for a month."

"Ten days, I've reckoned, provided I don't run off the right track."

Such poverty shocked her, she felt she must help him, but didn't know how to do so without hurting his feelings:

"I hope you will forgive me," she began in some confusion; "I do not wish to pry into your circumstances, but unless you are walking to Liverpool from choice, will you allow me to lend you some money to cover your traveling expenses to the States?" She really meant "give," but felt that to say so would be to insult him, and for a moment she almost feared her words had done that as it was; he seemed to draw himself up, and a faint flush spread over his thin face.

"You mean kindly, but I cannot borrow money when there is so little possibility of my ever being able to repay it," he said.

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"But when you get to America you will find something to do, and it would not matter if you did not return my loan for years and years."

But he remained obstinate, and she felt rather hurt at his pride; he noticed the disappointed expression which spread over her features, and added in a gentler tone:

"Do not think me proud or pigheaded, and forgive my apparent churlishness; your kindly interest has already gladdened my heart far more than gold or silver, and were I only a strong man instead of a miserable wreck, I would accept your offer with alacrity; but knowing that the hand of death is already upon me, the consciousness of being in anyone's debt would prove but an additional burden to those I have already to bear."

She at last prevailed upon him to allow her to provide him with warmer clothing for crossing the ocean, and sufficient money to pay his fare to Liverpool, as he assured her that he still possessed the wherewithal to purchase his passage to the States. At the entrance to the town two young ladies bowed to the fair driver, and the man by her side raised his hat. "They can't see my boots," was his inward reflection.

"Who on earth has the Honourable Betty got hold of to-day?" said the taller of the two.

"Goodness knows," replied the other; "one day you'll meet her driving the Duke of Dashire, and the next she'll be giving his laundress a lift. Her present companion looks shabby enough to be a professor."

"Or a millionaire," suggested the first speaker.

In the town the Honourable Elizabeth Curlew, to give her her full title, drew up at a linen-draper's, whence she soon emerged with a good-sized parcel, which she handed to her companion, saying: "Your train goes in a quarter of an hour, there are the things, and you will wear them, won't you?"

"Indeed, I will." He tried to stammer out some words of thanks, but a lump rose in his throat and defeated his polite intention.

"Good-bye!" she said, as she gave him her hand, which was gloveless. He took it within his own lean fingers, uncovered his head and reverently kissed it.

"You have given me back my faith in human nature," he murmured, and his last memory of England was the figure of a girl in a yellow dog-cart, with tear-drops glistening in her eyes.

At Liverpool the man found a respectable lodging, and when he woke up to see the sun shining through the curtainless window, it was with something almost like hope that he contemplated his trip to America.

If only he could get as far as Los Angeles he knew a man there, an old college chum, who would give him a clerkship, and the fine climate might set him on his legs again. But the thought was no sooner conceived than he put it away as chimerical. How was it possible to cross that great continent on nothing more than steerage passage money?

He sat up in bed and began to open his parcel. He carefully unknotted the string and discovered some woollen underclothing, upon the top vest a note was pinned, addressed

TO MY NEIGHBOUR.

He opened it and found to his boundless astonishment that it contained bank notes to the value of one hundred pounds and read as follows:

My friend, when you open this note and discover its contents, you will doubtless think that I am out of my mind. Before, however, condemning me to such a lamentable fate, let me justify my action.

In defence of my behaviour I may state that I am overburdened with riches, and that this hundred pounds to me is what a sovereign would be to the majority of middle-class people. "Unto whomsoever much is given." You know the rest, don't you? Also, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," etc. You know that also.

By giving you this, I am but doing my duty; a less sum would have been useless in starting you upon a career suitable to your station and capabilities. It is not my concern what use you make of it, or whether you are a deserving case; that is your business. I have but done my little in giving you another chance in life by reaching out to you a helping hand at the critical moment.

Do not be angry with me; if you only knew the misery of having that in abundance for which others are starving. Think of the happiness you have given me, and believe me when I say I shall ever remember you with the interest of a friend. Do not attempt to return the money; I told you my name, but not the whole of it, and my home is nearly thirty miles from Hedley.

May God speed you.

* * * * *

Ten years passed.

One of the girls in the post-office at Laburnum Grove, W., was thinking of the splendours in which she had once participated, when, through the open door she saw a smart carriage draw up and a beautifully-dressed woman enter the office.

"Five shillings' worth of penny stamps," she said, as she approached the counter.

"Nelly!" exclaimed the assistant in glad surprise:

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger, "I think you have made a mistake." She spoke coldly, but there was a conscious flush on her face which a man standing by, and idly watching the pair as he folded a paper in his pocket-book, was quick to remark:

"Excuse me," replied the girl, with a pale face and a strange light shining in her usually gentle eyes, as she forced the woman to meet her gaze, "I mistook you for an old friend, Lady Eleanor Fairfax; it was a blunder on my part."

There was a latent irony in her voice which caused the man to move forward in order to get a better view of her through the wire which a paternal Government erects to keep the public at a respectful distance. He gave a perceptible start upon catching sight of her, for at last, after weeks of fruitless search, he had suddenly discovered his former benefactress, not moving in the circle where he had expected to find her, but earning a weary livelihood as a post-office assistant. His discovery filled him with such a variety of emotions that, instead of leaving the office, he stood and watched the clerk as she counted out stamps and change to the lady she was serving.

"Anything more, madam?" she asked in a quiet, businesslike manner:

"No, thank you," replied the other, and hastily gathering up her money went out of the office, looking hot and confused.

As soon as she had gone, the assistant turned her back upon the counter and occupied herself at an opposite desk. The man watched her with intense interest; she took out her handkerchief, and when she turned round again he could see traces of tears on her wan face.

"I beg your pardon, I thought you had been served," she said, as she noticed him still standing there.

"I forgot," he replied, "I wanted a shilling's worth of stamps, and can you tell me if there is a telegraph office at the station as well as the town of Hedley?"

"It is a good-sized place, and there are four, no five," she said, correcting herself, "offices in the town where they receive telegrams, and one at each of the stations."

"Thank you," he said, and picking up his stamps went out into the street, his head in a whirl and his spirits transcendently high. "Now I must find out where she

lives, her name, and how I can best pay that money back to her."

In a few days, with the assistance of a gentlemanly detective, he ascertained the important facts. She lived in a modest lodging not far from her work, and her name was Miss Elizabeth Curlew. He at first intended to return the loan by post, but a longing to speak with her came to him. In order to scrape up an acquaintance with her he haunted the Laburnum Grove post-office, and soon the other girls began to tease Miss Curlew about her "swell" as they called him:

As the weeks crept on it began to make her feel uncomfortable, when she saw him enter the office; her faith in the opposite sex had been sadly shaken, when, upon the loss of her fortune, the man to whom she had been engaged jilted her, and she looked with suspicion upon handsome strangers, who scraped up an acquaintance with girls outside their own class of society. So she took to avoiding him and slipping behind a desk when he put in an appearance, and was surprised to find on these occasions how much she missed his friendly scraps of conversation upon the topics of the day.

He soon noticed she had begun to avoid him, and half guessing her reasons, promptly decided to ask her to go for a walk with him in the park the following Sunday afternoon, and was duly snubbed for his temerity. He left the office with a sombre expression on his face, and a tumult in his heart. He had started this quest of her in the first instance to relieve himself of what he had always looked upon as a debt, and which until this year he had never been in a position to repay.

But now, the sight of her drudging away so patiently day after day in this sweltering June weather haunted him, wherever he went, and he longed to bring back to her face the happy look it bore when he first met her on that, the most eventful day of his life:

She was walking home one evening when he accosted her not far from the post-office. She was so pleased to see him, she quite forgot to think about the correctness of meeting him out of doors:

"I won't detain you a moment," he said, raising his hat, "but I have a most particular reason for wishing to speak with you alone. Will you grant me an interview in the park on Saturday afternoon?"

She made no reply; inclination and Mrs. Grundy were struggling for the mastery:

"I don't wish to persecute you, but there really is something I wish to talk to you about, and it is impossible to do that in the office."

She looked up at him, her clear eyes meeting his, and a faint blush on her face. "I have never done such a thing before, but if you particularly want to speak to me, I could meet you somewhere in the park," she said rather incoherently.

The following Saturday afternoon found him waiting for her near that favourite rendezvous, the Achilles Statue.

"I have asked you here to tell you a story," he said, as he selected two chairs under a shady tree, some distance from the main thoroughfares.

"About thirteen years ago there was a certain young fellow at Cambridge called Alexander Marchmont, who was heir to a large estate. He had a quarrel with his father on a matter of religion, the outcome of which was that the stern and bigoted parent disinherited him, and the son in his pride vowed never to appeal to him, even were he starving at his gates.

"Youth is buoyant, and it seemed to the boy, who took his degree with honours, that he would have no difficulty in earning a livelihood. Sickness, however, came upon him; the little money he had independently of his father soon melted away; he sank from one humble station to another, and at last starvation was really almost at his door. His health, meantime, had been going from bad to worse; unless he could manage to reach some favourable climate he knew he must die, so as a forlorn hope he made up his mind to try to reach California, where he hoped to find an old college friend, whom he knew would not desert him in his poverty.

"He had just sufficient money left—with a few shillings to spare—to pay his steerage fare across the Atlantic, if he could manage to reach Liverpool. He started from a town in the Midlands and got about halfway, growing weaker every day, for he slept out at night, and his boots were worn almost through, causing him great pain.

"He was dragging along a country road one fine morning when a beautiful girl drove past in a yellow dogcart; the sight of her in her affluence and comfort roused all the evil passions in his nature, and he could have cursed her for her prosperity. It seemed to him that she slightly halted as she passed by, but if she meant to patronise him she had mistaken her object,

and he did not vouchsafe her a look. However, he had to pocket his pride and inquire the way from her later on, because it was a serious thing to him when he ran off the right road, and had perhaps to retrace his steps a mile or two, and when she spoke to him in her gentle, refined voice, and treated him as the gentleman he was, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, it finally broke him up altogether."

The speaker's voice was hoarse with emotion; he paused, and the woman by his side, her eyes swimming with tears, took hold of his arm with unconscious sympathy.

"Was that really *you*?" she gasped. "Oh, how often I have thought of you! Thank Heaven, my help did not come too late! Oh, I am so glad, so glad!" she murmured, and her voice was like music in his ears.

"From the moment I was independent of Fortune she turned round and smiled at me; my friend at Los Angeles welcomed me as only a true friend can, gave me a clerkship in his bank, from which I rose to be a junior partner in the firm. Last year my brother died, and my father, brokenhearted, and bereft as it were of his two children, besought me to return, through the medium of the daily papers. I came back to be reconciled to him, and the poor old man passed away peacefully about six months ago. After arriving in California I left no stone unturned to discover your name and whereabouts, but until a few weeks ago, so far as I was concerned, you had vanished off the face of the earth. Dearest, what had become of you?"

The tender epithet dropped from his lips without forethought; he was so accustomed of late to think of her as his "dearest" that he really was not aware of having given utterance to the word, and she apparently did not notice.

"When you first knew me I was the Honourable Elizabeth Curlew; for three generations my people had been wealthy brewers, and my father, for his services to the Government, was created a peer. He had been dead about two years when I met you, and I was considered one of the wealthiest heiresses in England. My affairs were managed by an old, and, as it proved afterwards, too much trusted agent, for one day I woke up to find myself as poor as the proverbial church mouse; I had even to sell my jewellery to pay the debts with which the dishonest man had left me burdened.

"I was only about twenty-one at the time, and, like most girls, lamentably ignorant of business matters; my fair-weather friends forsook me upon the loss of my fortune. A few remained true, I am glad to say, but as I was obliged to go out into the world to earn my living, I gradually dropped them one by one. I could not afford to go and visit them, and I was generally too tired at the end of my day's work.

"They wanted me at first to go out as a governess or companion, but the thought of mixing in the society to which I had been accustomed, with the restraint of a paid attendant, was more than I could stand. The chief thing that deterred me was the thought of meeting the man to whom I had formerly been engaged. I was foolishly proud, so I declined all offers of help, and struck out a line of my own, and have been for the last seven years a post-office clerk, and, with the exception of a few desponding times, I have never regretted it."

During her narration he had taken her hand and held it tenderly in his own, where she suffered it to lie; he now drew out of his pocket a packet.

"As soon as I found out who you were," he said, "I was anxious to make over to you your lawful property, but I felt I could not bear to send it by post, I wanted to give it into your own hands. See, some of the original notes are here, and the very first money I made I put aside as sacred to you, something too valuable to be used again in common barter"—he placed upon her lap a bundle of notes and a little bag containing a collection of American coins.

She said nothing, but sat staring at the small fortune in her hands—all the world seemed suddenly to have turned grey and sordid. So this was the reason why he had sought her out and cultivated her acquaintance? And yet she felt there was nothing to blame him for, but it seemed to make everything different.

She moved slightly away from him, and he felt imperceptibly almost that she was not pleased.

"You forget this was no loan," she said, "but a gift, as my letter testified."

He looked at her with a puzzled expression on his face, hurt by the cold formality of her tones; he had, with the denseness of a man, expected her to be as pleased as he was about the transaction.

"But I never accepted it as a gift," he replied. "It takes two to make a bargain," and he laughed.

But it was no laughing matter to her; this was the second rebuff she had had within a few weeks. The first when her old friend Lady Fairfax refused to acknowledge her, and now the friendship which had sprung up between herself and this man was merely that through it he might have the opportunity of paying her off; and yet it was all true what he said—it takes two to make a bargain; and if he had accepted it only as a loan, she was, of course, bound to release him from his debt.

"I suppose you are right," she continued with even tones; "I will send you a formal receipt to-morrow canceling the debt, then you will no longer feel under any obligation to me; and now I think it is time I was going back. Thank you very much for troubling to hunt me up and return the money, it will be very useful to me now that I am a poor woman." She stood up, forcing herself to meet his eyes, and holding out her hand to say good-bye.

"And do you think I have asked you to meet me here," he exclaimed, drawing himself to his full height, while his eyes blazed, "simply to return that beastly money to you? I wish it and I were at the bottom of the sea, if it is going to come between you and me. You must know that I love you. Do you suppose that I should have gone day after day to that hole of a post-office simply because I wanted to give you back the filthy lucre? No, you know in your heart that was not so, but because of your pride you will send me off without giving me so much as a chance to explain myself!" He stood there looking stern and indignant.

She made no reply, but two tears forced themselves from her eyes and ran slowly down her cheeks, she felt like a misunderstood child who was being scolded for what it could not explain; she turned her head away, that he might not see she was crying, but he was too quick for her.

"Beloved, I'm a brute to make you cry!" he exclaimed, and took her in his arms. "Now put me out of my misery and say you will be my wife."

She never knew quite what she did say, or if indeed she said anything at all, but in happy after years she once remarked that she never thought she should fall so low as to marry a tramp, which observation caused her husband no little amusement.

"But then, you see, he was such a handsome beggar," he retorted mischievously.

A Dangerous Experiment.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ By ALAN ADAIR.

Telling of the awful ordeal through which a doctor passed in order to make himself famous.

AN UNUSUAL PROPOSAL.

PAUL MERRETT ran up the stairs two steps at a time, quite regardless of the fact that the old butler was puffing and blowing at the back of him: When he came to a full stop, however, his doctor's eye saw that he should not have come up so fast:

"You should not run so fast at your age, James," he said:

"I don't often have to, sir, there are not many who get up these stairs as fast as you."

"They have not my incentive," said the young man: "Announce me, James!"

"Mr. Paul Merrett!" proclaimed James, and ushered the young man into a beautiful room, in which the *most* beautiful thing of all was its mistress, who rose quickly to meet him:

Evelyn Faucit was the only daughter of an immensely rich banker, who had never been able to refuse her anything. Consequently, when she chose to fall in love—or rather when she fell in love without choosing to—with Paul Merrett, he very reluctantly gave his consent, although he never let her forget that he was averse to her marriage with a doctor who was not even a distinguished man:

Evelyn promptly said that she was quite sure that Paul would become as distinguished as his uncle, Sir Dighton, who had been own physician to Royalty. She further told her father that if Paul, within two years of her engagement to him, did not make some important discovery which would put his name well to the fore, she would give him up, and accept a husband of her father's choosing, which really amounted to the knowledge that Evelyn was very sure of her man: Whereupon the banker consulted his son George, who, being a married man himself, knew that women mostly get their own way, and advised his father to give a conditional consent to the engagement:

Paul Merrett was dining at the Faucits',

and Evelyn had expected him earlier for that two minutes' chat which lovers delight in:

"What has detained you?" she asked after he had greeted her.

"A case at the hospital," he said, and she noticed that he was intensely excited: "Evelyn, I believe the case I have seen to-day may make an important difference in our lives—it is this: I saw a man whose lunacy is developing in a way that coincides with a theory of mine. If I can work out that theory properly my fortune is made, and my wife is won!"

"Really, Paul?" she asked:

"Really," he said, and she saw his eyes were alight: "If I can work out that theory I should be the first specialist in that branch of medicine—but to work it out—" He hesitated.

"Well, Paul," she said, "to work it out?"

"I should have to be amongst lunatics day and night!"

"Oh, Paul!" she cried, "I could not bear to be attached to an asylum!"

"But I don't want to go in as a *doctor*! I want to go as a *patient*!" he cried, still eagerly excited: "I want to see madmen when they are off their guard—men who would take me to be one of themselves."

He paused, quite out of breath, and she began to laugh:

"How funny you are, Paul. One would think you were in earnest."

"I am in earnest," he said: "In grim earnest. You don't understand the way I love you: I would stick at nothing to get you!"

"But why not go as an attendant?"

"That would not do, I should be in the same relationship to the patients as a doctor. I must get into an asylum as a patient if I am to do any good."

"But, Paul," she said—it was clear she hated the thought:

"Dearest," he broke in, "I won't do it in England. I have thought it all out. I know a man who is down on his luck, I won't tell you his name because he has done a shady thing and wants to begin life afresh in America. He shall take me to France and pretend that I am his brother, and have me examined by the board of an asylum; I will sign the doctor's certificate with my own name and then, when I come out again, I shall be famous for ever."

"I hate it," she said emphatically.

"But, Evelyn, don't you see it is the means to our end. I see your father looking at me sometimes, as if he wondered why you wanted to marry me, and why he was such a fool as to give his consent. It is not only money he wants, for Sir Dighton left me that, but it is position. It is a way of gaining that position."

"But Paul," she cried, and laid her hand on his arm. "Do you think I should have a happy minute during the time you were shut up in that place? How long would it be, dearest?"

"Six months, if I am lucky," he answered cheerfully.

"Six months! You propose to leave me for six months! Who knows what I might be persuaded to do in six months? What would father say?"

"He need never know it."

"If he does not, he will think you and I have quarreled, and he will press Sir Claude on me. Oh," she continued in accents of despair, "I would rather wait until my hair grew white than let you imprison yourself in a madhouse!"

"But your father, Evelyn, and your promise to him—we cannot wait."

And even as he spoke the banker entered the room.

"I did not know you were here," said the banker, walking up and shaking hands with his future son-in-law.

"I always manage to have a few moments alone with Evelyn," said Paul. "On these occasions I see so little of her."

John Faucit twirled the end of his moustache thoughtfully. Evelyn saw that he looked rather worried.

"Anything wrong, father?" she asked.

"Things don't look very bright just now," he said with a half-sigh. "But there, I don't suppose they will really affect us, so it is no use crying before the milk is spilt any more than after."

"Well, it is not your way," said Evelyn.

She felt a little anxious, however, simply

because it was *not* his way. However, she knew that her brother George was coming to dinner. If George, who was his father's partner, looked anxious, then there was cause for anxiety—if not, it was a mere passing fear on the elder man's side.

"Let me see. You go in with Sir Claude Everard?" he said to his daughter.

Paul Merrett frowned—like most strong men he had very strong likes and dislikes. He could not tell why he disliked Sir Claude Everard, except perhaps for the reason that he knew that he admired Evelyn, and that he was a banker. It annoyed him, too, to see how John Faucit always ignored his right to monopolise Evelyn and to have a place at her side.

"Yes," said Evelyn quietly, "I suppose I must."

"Most girls would like it," said John Faucit. "I thought you always liked Claude Everard?"

"I do like him," said the girl, "what little I know of him. He seems modest, and kind, and well-bred, and he has plenty to say for himself."

"And," added John Faucit, "he has almost a unique position for so young a man. He is at the head of a most flourishing private bank—the most flourishing private bank in the kingdom."

"Ah, that is your point of view, not mine," said Evelyn lightly. "I don't talk to the banker, you see, but to the agreeable young man. Failing Paul," she smiled at her *fiancé*, who was standing by, quiet and rather glum, "I would rather go in to dinner with him than any other man I know."

But her smile had not the effect of rousing Paul from his rather sullen silence. On the contrary, the gloom seemed to settle upon him more determinedly than before. Perhaps he would rather have preferred that the man who was to take in his betrothed had not been the man she liked best next to him.

Paul was a man of very obstinate, firm disposition; he had made up his mind to prosecute the scheme which he had only thought of that very day, and he also knew that he was doing it for the sole reason of marrying Evelyn. If he had not fallen in love with her, he would have been content to spend the whole of his private fortune in research work, but now things were different. Still, the thought of going away and leaving the field clear for a rival did not appeal to him very much. He knew that Evelyn

loved him, and that he had power over her, but he did not know how that love would be sustained during an absence that might extend to over six months.

"She won't get a line from me, nor anything to remind her of my existence," he said to himself. "I shall be like a dead man to her and to everybody. It is a great strain to put on anyone's love. It is so easy to say that six months is nothing, but six months exposed to the continual society of a man who loves her—a nice man like Everard, too—will be a hard strain on her love."

The guests came in quickly, George Faucit and his wife being amongst the number: Evelyn watched her brother attentively, and decided that he, too, looked worried: Lady Jane, his wife, who was the daughter of an impecunious Irish earl, and who was astonishingly full of common sense, looked worried, too. Then Evelyn felt that there was cause for worry.

There never was anything done in the banking-house of Faucit and Co. that Lady Jane did not know. She was as good a man of business as any of them. Paul Merrett liked her, for she was kindness itself, only she had never hidden from him that she did not consider him good enough for her lovely sister-in-law.

She was the one who bearded Paul that evening. Paul had led in to dinner a portly dowager, who, seeing that she could not get a word out of him, took to her dinner with a great deal of animation: Lady Jane turned to Paul, who was sitting at her left.

"Why are you so solemn, Paul?" she asked.

"I am going away," he replied.

"What does Evelyn think about it?" asked Lady Jane.

"I scarcely know. She does not seem to like it, but it is necessary to my future—our future," he added, after a pause.

"How so?"

"I am going to have opportunities for special research which I cannot have here," said Paul Merrett. "I cannot tell you where I am going—it is a secret."

"But surely Evelyn will know—you will tell her?"

"What I can," said Merrett, "but I shall not be able to get any letters to her or from her."

Lady Jane raised her eyebrows.

"Well," he asked suddenly, "do you think I am a fool?"

"Anything but that," answered Lady Jane: "But I do not think you are behaving very well to Evelyn."

"How so?" he asked almost violently: "Why, it is for Evelyn's sake that I am going—anything rather than go on with this wretched state of things!"

"What wretched state of things?" asked Lady Jane: Her private opinion was that Paul and Evelyn had had a quarrel, and that was why he told her that he intended going away.

"This state of being engaged on suffering!" said Paul rather angrily: "I am a guest at her father's house like all the other men who come here, and I have to suffer seeing all the other men of good position monopolise her whilst I am left out in the cold!"

"But, surely in her position as lady of the house she must entertain the man of the highest rank here present?" said Lady Jane.

"Oh, I know that!" said Paul, "and although you may not believe me, yet I am not vulgarly jealous. I know Evelyn loves me, and if I felt that she would be my wife in a few months' time, I should not care what man monopolised her! It is the uncertainty of our marriage that troubles me! I must have something to offer Evelyn besides merely a comfortable, or, if you prefer calling it by another name, a luxurious home. She must be the wife of a distinguished man! I will never sink to the ignominy of being 'the beautiful Mrs. Merrett's husband!'"

Although he spoke so emphatically, he liked calling Evelyn Mrs. Merrett, and the thought of it, somehow, softened him:

"I am an ungrateful bear to grumble at all!" he said, after a while: "I ought to go down on my knees for the sole fact that she did not send me right away when I committed the indiscretion of asking her to marry me!"

Lady Jane smiled. She was the most "un-Irish" woman that ever stepped out of the Emerald Isle. She could not understand anyone with a mercurial temperament: She was always the same, even in misfortune.

Evelyn gave the signal and the ladies rose: Paul held the door open and caught Evelyn's radiant smile as she passed through: He smiled back at her again, at which her spirits rose, for although she had been talking in so animated a fashion to Sir Claude, yet she had felt that things

were not at all right for her: She was troubled by Paul's determination to leave her, and she was still more troubled by her father's and her brother's looks: Something was wrong she was quite sure:

She took advantage of the ladies being alone to go up to her sister-in-law:

"What is wrong, Jane?" she asked:

"Nothing definite as yet," said Lady Jane in a low voice; "several houses to whom the bank has lent money have collapsed: George fears that it may not stand the strain: We can only hope for some good friend to come to the rescue!"

She spoke those last words in a very meaning tone, resting for a little with peculiar emphasis on the words "some good friend."

"Such as?" asked Evelyn, who was as quick as lightning.

"Sir Claude," said Lady Jane:

"I see," said Evelyn, and pressed her lips together. She did see the drift of Lady Jane's words, and they made her only the more obstinately think of Paul:

"I saw you talking to Paul," she began; "did he tell you anything?"

"Only that he would be away for more than six months, and that he could not let anyone know where he was—it sounds mysterious and I hate mysteries—also, I don't like the idea of a young man who goes away when he may be wanted!"

"Paul knows nothing of business affairs," said Evelyn quickly:

"Then he ought to," said Lady Jane, who always said that there was nothing she would like half so well as keeping a shop: "You ought to tell him, Evelyn!"

"I probably shall, Jane."

Before he left that night Paul asked Evelyn what time he could see her on the morrow:

He spoke so surlily that Evelyn was inclined to give him a pettish answer, but she had great self-control and she loved the man who, she knew, had it in him to suffer as much as to love: "Any time to-morrow afternoon," she said: "If it is warm enough we might go and sit in the Park together!"

"Very well!" he said, in a rather more agreeable tone of voice, for there was nothing he liked so much as being seen in public with Evelyn: "Very well, I will come for you about three, if you will be ready!"

"I will be ready, sure enough," she said, her brilliant smile irradiating her face:

"I shall be quite ready, you dear old cross-patch!"

He caught her hand and pressed it, but he went almost immediately, seeing that the others seemed to wish that he were gone: The others *did* wish it: John Faucit and his son George and Lady Jane were having rather a serious business consultation: Evelyn went up to them:

"Please don't leave me out," she said; "are things really serious?"

"Jane here thinks they are likely to become so!" The banker had an unlimited faith in his daughter-in-law:

Evelyn looked relieved:

"Oh, Jane is always a croaker!" she said merrily; and her words made the others relax from their seriousness.

EVELYN RECEIVES A SHOCK.

EVELYN was waiting for Paul when he came to fetch her for their stroll in the Park: It was early, so that they had the place mostly to themselves. They talked of indifferent things until they found a seat to their liking, and then Paul took the plunge:

"You remember my idea of yesterday, darling?" he asked:

"I have tried hard to forget it," she said; "only I can't."

"I don't want you to forget it," he said, "for I am going."

"I knew you would," she answered, with quiet despair: "If once you take a thing into your head, you do it, without thinking of what it will cost *me*."

"Do you think it will cost *me* nothing?" he cried passionately: "To be without even a sight of you for six months—to know that other men are hanging about you—when all day long your father and even that good Lady Jane are dinning into your ears that I am not good enough for you!"

She did not deny this:

"How are you going to put this precious plan of yours into execution?" she asked:

"My friend," he said, "is willing to do all I ask—he will personate my brother, we will live abroad for some few weeks—then I shall develop symptoms of mania—he will produce a certificate of lunacy from me, Paul Merrett, and I shall be examined before the board, and shall feign it so well that without doubt I shall be admitted into an asylum."

"But is it not dangerous—suppose they find out that you are not mad? Can't they proceed against you?"

"They won't find me out!" he said, with grim determination.

She sighed, and, looking up suddenly, saw Sir Claude Everard gazing at her, evidently surprised that she should be in the Park and in Paul's company. He stared hard at her, his face changing as he did so. Evelyn bowed, and he took off his hat: Paul Merrett glared savagely.

"That man," he said, "loves you."

She did not deny it, and Paul turned to her.

"It just maddens me to think I must go in order to win you!" he cried. "Oh, Evelyn, I am going away to-morrow—you are just everything, the very life and soul of me, and you know it. I am going away to-morrow—give me one perfect afternoon, Evelyn, before I go!"

She turned towards him at once, but there were tears in her eyes. "Oh, Paul," she cried, "I wish you were not to leave me!"

He took her back home, and then he could not make up his mind to part from her. But it was late, and he knew that Evelyn had social duties to perform.

"Are you doing anything to-night?" he asked her.

"We are dining out, and going to the Opera afterwards," she answered. "I wonder why father has not come home—he is never so late as this."

"He has driven out somewhere, perhaps," said Paul; "it is such a fine day."

"I don't know," said Evelyn doubtfully. "I don't know—he is worried about some business or other—I don't pretend to understand."

"I daresay he is," said Paul. "A banker has generally some business worries."

He spoke carelessly. He could never understand the fascination of making money.

"Ah, but I believe he is really worried," said Evelyn.

"I am sorry," said Paul, but he did not feel inclined to waste much time over John Faucit's business worries. "I suppose he has lost by this failure of Clays?"

"I daresay it is that," said Evelyn; and then Paul took his leave. He drove home to his rooms, but he felt he could not stay there.

"Why not go to-night?" he said to himself. "Once I am out of London, I

may feel better about leaving her—I shall feel as if the work were really begun. If I get only as far as Dover it will be something!"

He had made all his preparations, as he had originally intended to start early the next morning, so there was no reason for him to stay. He knew he should be miserable if he stayed in London, and he did not want to let his spirits run down: So he got into a cab and drove to the station, and caught the night train just as it was about to start, which he insisted on thinking a good omen.

Meanwhile, John Faucit had come home and had found his daughter very silent and pale. Evelyn was not a girl who could weep on the slightest occasion; indeed, she was wont to say that Society women could not afford to weep, and that they must needs practise self-restraint, but her father could see that she had passed through some great emotion, and that its effects were with her still.

"What is the matter, Evelyn?" he asked anxiously. "You have not heard anything, have you?"

"About what?" she asked. Her father himself looked troubled.

"The bank. Do you think Merrett could let me have ten thousand pounds?"

"Paul? I have just been saying 'Good-bye' to him," cried Evelyn.

"Where is he going to?"

"Abroad, on some secret work; I shall not know his address, nor shall I be able to hear from him."

John Faucit stared.

"I think you are a very trusting woman, Evelyn," he said; and then he added, with a bitter laugh: "Paul Merrett is one of those men who always make themselves scarce when they might be of use."

"I can write to him to-night," said Evelyn a little proudly, "and make your request. I am sure Paul can do it. He spends no money at all, and he inherited a good deal."

"He won't receive that letter," said John Faucit oracularly. "You will see that will be one of those letters which my gentleman will say has got lost in the post!"

Evelyn rose from her chair and wrote a letter; then she rang a bell, gave it to a footman, and told him to wait for an answer.

After dinner the man returned from Paul's. He said that Mr. Merrett had left

town sooner than he expected, and there was, therefore, no answer to the note.

John Faucit turned to his daughter: "I told you so, Evelyn," he said: "I knew he would fail us! I shall have to apply to Sir Claude now."

The shock was a cruel one to Evelyn: She had been relying upon this letter of Paul's, and now it had not come.

Without another word she turned and went to her room:

* * *

DANGER THREATENS PAUL.

ASYLUMS are not generally built with an idea of picturesqueness, and the lunatic asylum of Longvol was no exception to this rule: It was long, low, and of white stone, with pleasant green shutters; but it had no pretensions to beauty at all, being irregular in shape and rambling in construction. It stood in large, park-like grounds, and was entirely surrounded by a well-built, high wall, which was bristling on the top with glass.

With Paul Merrett's knowledge of madness, it had been quite an easy task to deceive the board of doctors who sat on his case. He had really found it so easy to get in that it occurred to him sometimes to wonder how he should get out. But he knew that he could prove himself sane to an ordinary board of doctors.

And once that he was in and treated like an ordinary patient, he began to study all those around him: He had not exaggerated the help it would be to him, and he saw at once that he had taken the only way to thoroughly become a master of his subject:

Paul Merrett had been an inmate of Longvol for about a month: Nothing of any consequence had happened to him at all, save that it grew rather hard at times for him to remember that he had to feign madness: When he was alone with the lunatics he sometimes forgot that he was pretending madness, and occasionally he forgot to assume it: He had got himself confined by simply declaring that he was the Emperor Napoleon, and he was put amongst the harmless inmates: He tried to convince the attendants that he was sane on every point but this one, and he succeeded so well that they used him sometimes to help in the other wards of the asylum: This suited him thoroughly well:

It was a hot day in September, and Paul

had been put in charge of some of the men who were to walk about the grounds. He was rather tired, and had sat himself down on a bench whence he could observe the men who had come with him: For about half-an-hour nothing happened, but as he was sitting there, thinking of Evelyn, he suddenly heard the rustle of a woman's dress. He looked up and saw a tall, handsome woman dressed in the uniform of a nurse: Paul remembered to have seen her before. It was in the hospital.

"I should like to sit down for a little, if I do not disturb you," she said to Paul; and Paul assured her that she did not disturb him at all. The nurse sat down, drew out of her pocket rather a dainty piece of embroidery, and began drawing her needle through it slowly. Paul watched her, fascinated. Suddenly she put her work down, fixed him with her great eyes, and said:

"Pardon me—what are you doing here?"

Paul was taken off his guard for a moment:

"What am I doing here?" he repeated; and then he remembered: "I am the Emperor Napoleon," he said, "and this——"

He was interrupted by a light peal of laughter.

"Please spare me that story," she said: "Why, man, don't you know that it is no good your trying to deceive me: Why, your eyes were as sane as eyes could be just a moment ago!"

For a moment Paul was so much taken aback that he did not know what to answer: He looked into the handsome nurse's face with as mad an expression as he could assume, but it was all to no purpose: A contemptuous smile wreathed her lips, that was all:

"I have watched you ever since you arrived," she continued: "I do not know how you came to impose upon our board of doctors: They are clever men, but they want to prove too much! I saw you walk in—you passed quite close to my window, and I had a good look at you: My first impression was that you were a man, one of whose relatives was kept here, but subsequent study of you has shown me that it was not so. Now the one thing I want to know is your motive: If I am not satisfied that it is a good one, I will denounce you to the doctors at once!"

Paul hesitated for a moment—should he keep up the ridiculous farce of madness or should he tell the truth—he must make

up his mind quickly, for the nurse evidently wanted an answer at once. He dropped all attempts of deceiving her. He could see that she noted it.

"I came here," he said quietly, "because I thought I should have so good an opportunity of studying madness. I am a doctor, and I wanted to gain fame and a name."

The nurse looked at him steadfastly for a moment or so, to see whether or no he were speaking the truth.

"You are an Englishman, are you not?" she asked.

"Yes, I am," said Paul. "I hope that, now you know that my motive is a good one, you will not betray me to the doctors."

"I shall not betray you to the doctors," she said, with a strange smile.

"Thank you," he said gravely: "Can you keep a secret, Nurse——?"

He stopped interrogatively.

"Nurse Marie," she answered him. "I can keep a secret as long as I wish to do so. If I choose to hold my tongue, I can! That is all!"

"You will choose in my case?" he asked rather appealingly.

"That depends entirely," she answered.

"Confess, now, that it is a pleasant thing to be able to talk to me without having to assume madness?"

"Yes, it is," he confessed. Somehow or other he did not feel at all sure of her.

Nurse Marie was a tall, very handsome woman of about thirty-five, with very clear blue eyes forming a contrast to her jet-black hair. When Paul had looked at her again, he was not surprised that those eyes of hers should have found out his secret. If any eyes had a penetrating expression hers had.

And she was a handsome woman, there was no doubt of that, but there was not about her that softness which one generally sees in those who nurse the sick. Even whilst he confessed to himself that she was very handsome, Paul thought to himself that he would not care to be left to her tender mercies as a nurse. She looked a hard woman.

"It is my turn to question now," said Paul Merrett, who was never behind in answering. "What made you adopt sick-nursing as a profession?"

The woman looked at him and smiled.

"Why, don't you believe that I am a good nurse?" she asked.

"I say no such thing," said Paul. "I only asked you why you took it up."

"There was not much else for me to do," said the woman — "and I had to earn my living; I was not brought up to work, and I had a bad husband. When he died I thought of this, and here I am!"

"Poor soul!" said Paul softly.

She gave him a quick, sideways glance, and then she laughed a little hardly.

"I have not found many persons who have pitied me," she said. "Many have cavilled at me, but none have pitied me."

"I pitied you because you said that you had not a good husband," he said. "It seems to me that nothing can be worse for a woman than to have a husband who is not good to her."

"You are right," she said. "It sours a woman as nothing else does."

"It should not," he said gently. "It should bring out what is good in you. You women have no idea of women's influence over men. I am accounted a strong man, and yet I know that a good woman could have a great influence over me."

She looked him up and down, and then she said:

"Yes, I suppose you are a strong man—you have a well-cut chin and a firm mouth, and you hold yourself as if you believed in yourself; besides, if you were not a strong man you would not be here. It is a hazardous experiment, you know."

"Why hazardous?" he asked. "When I have thoroughly established the theory that I want to work out, I shall convince the doctors that I am cured, and shall go."

She laughed a little cruelly.

"Do you think it is so easy to get out of a lunatic asylum?" she asked.

"Certainly, if you are quite sane! I take it that the doctors don't want to keep a man here if he is sane. It is not like a private asylum where it might be a temptation to keep a man for the sake of the fees. Their one object here must be to get rid of the sane people, so as to have more room for the mad."

"Yes," she answered. "That is a very good theory indeed, and it would always obtain if we were an ideal community: But we are not!"

"How does that come in?"

"If one of the warders or the officials had a spite against you, they could always produce evidence that would convince the board that you were still mad."

"But why should they?" asked Paul. "Why should anyone have a spite against me?"

"You look like a man who would stir up strong feelings," she answered.

Paul thought for a moment—this was quite true; he had either been liked or much disliked. Still, the idea was absurd.

"The doctors would believe me," he said. "If need be, I should tell them my story—there is a fellow-feeling between men of science; they would believe me, I am sure, if I proved to them I was sane."

"You seem to forget," said Nurse Marie placidly, "that these doctors, these men of science between whom and you there would be a common feeling, have just certified you insane."

Paul was silent. The situation had not occurred to him before—he had taken infinite pains to get admitted into the asylum, he had not thought of any difficulty in getting out! But probably Nurse Marie exaggerated the whole thing, and he determined to put it from his mind.

Nurse Marie was very pleasant, and it was rather a boon to find one person who would talk to him like a rational being. At parting from him that day she gave him a word of advice.

"Beware of Doctor Dent!" she said. "He is younger than most, and actually still uses his eyes!"

He laughed.

"I shall remember your 'actually uses his eyes' when I am attached to an asylum," he said. "Must you go now—our talk has been a great refreshment to me?"

"Yes, I must," she answered—"my hour is up; but I shall be in this summer-house at the same place every day—you may perhaps desire a little rational conversation. I say the summer-house, because then people cannot see us talking—they might question your madness if they did."

* * *

NURSE MARIE IN A NEW LIGHT.

THE weeks passed very quickly, notwithstanding the fact that Paul had now and again so great a longing to see Evelyn that he wondered how many more weeks he could stand this being away from her. He had fixed six months for the limit of his absence, and the time had already nearly elapsed.

The new year had begun, and he knew now that his time spent amongst all these uncongenial surroundings had not been spent in vain. His theory had been substantiated—he knew now as much as there

was to know about lunacy. And his fertile mind had already arranged all his matter in the form of a book which was substantially written, although he had not put a line upon paper. He knew that the book would make a sensation, it would put him in the forefront of scientific doctors whom the world delights to honour.

And then there was Evelyn—Evelyn, whom he could now offer a name worth her acceptance. Paul, in those days, when he seemed to see his studies crowned with success, and when he felt that his marriage with Evelyn was daily becoming nearer, was a very happy man.

In those months his friendship with Nurse Marie had progressed rapidly. He talked over cases with her, and her quick wits helped him wonderfully. But he never thought of her as a woman at all—he thought of her as a nurse—a clever nurse, and that was all.

At the same time he knew that he liked to spend his hour with her. He told her how much he looked forward to it and how necessary she was to him, but that was all. Paul did not see that his daily life in the world would have been of interest to the handsome woman by his side. Naturally he did not speak to her of Evelyn—he had very rarely spoken of Evelyn to anybody—he was not likely to speak of her to a nurse at a lunatic asylum.

It was a cold day in January, and Paul had taken refuge in one of the small rooms to escape the bitter cold outside. He was sitting there when he heard Nurse Marie's voice close to him. She had a bandage in her hand.

"Poor fellow!" she said to Paul, as she approached him. "I was told you had cut your hand; come into the dispensary with me, and let me bandage it."

Paul was about to exclaim that he had not cut himself, when she stopped him and wound the bandage she held round his hand.

"Be quiet!" she said under her breath, and he began to understand that it was a ruse to get him into the dispensary. Indeed, when they had reached the dispensary, he was glad, for the room looked cosy, and there was an inviting-looking arm-chair in which Nurse Marie bade him seat himself.

Paul liked his comforts as little as any man, but he had fared very hardly since he had entered the asylum, and the cold was very bitter that day.

"Do you want to say something to me?"

he asked under his breath, thinking that there must be something of importance that she had to communicate:

"I always want to talk to you," she said; "particularly now, when your time here is so short."

He threw back his head and laughed for joy at the thought of being free again:

Nurse Marie looked pale, but for a moment she did not speak. Then she said, a little unsteadily:

"You are glad to go?"

"Glad!" he repeated: "I am a man of rather strong feelings, as you know, Nurse Marie, and there is no glad or sorry with me. It is either miserable or madly happy that I am to go. Why should I not be? I have done the thing I came to do."

She turned round to the table sharply and began to get out some lint.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I must tie up your finger," she said: "Someone may have heard me ask you to come into the dispensary with me—besides, you must not be seen coming out without some visible mark of your being here: Give me your hand and I will tie it up."

She knelt down beside him and he stretched out his hands:

"Which will you have, nurse?" he asked, laughing.

But she turned paler still:

"I would like them both," she answered in a low tone:

"What, both! You cruel thing—fancy you wanting me to cut both my hands!"

"I did not say that," returned Nurse Marie, who to-day seemed to be unable to speak out loud: "Let me have the left one."

"Why the left one?" Paul was warm and comfortable, and he liked talking to Nurse Marie:

"It is nearest the heart!" she said quickly:

"Have the left one by all means," he said cheerfully, and stretched out his left hand:

She began bandaging it more deftly than nurses even usually bandage:

"Why, I begin to wish I had really cut it!" he said; and then he stopped: "Do you know, I shall miss you, Nurse Marie? You are the only thing in Longvol that I could possibly miss; and when I think of it, I shall remember your kindness and quickness."

She was still kneeling beside him and she turned away her head:

"I shall not stay here after you leave," she said suddenly. "Do you think I could?"

Paul looked at her in utter astonishment; if the asylum had suddenly fallen in, he could not feel more astonished:

"Why should you leave the asylum?" he asked. "I thought you told me that nursing was the only thing you could do?"

"The only thing!" she said, and then she leant her elbow on the arm of his chair: "Paul," she said softly, "can't you guess why I cannot stay here after you leave? Is the answer so difficult to guess?"

And still Paul did not understand her: He had never felt himself to be at all fascinating, and all through his engagement to Evelyn he had wondered how a woman could love a man like himself. He knew that Evelyn did love him, but he wondered how she did it:

He looked at the woman kneeling beside him, and he thought that her colour went and came too quickly for health, and he could see that she was agitated.

"I can't guess why," he said, "because, you see, you have never nursed me. You have talked to me out of the goodness of your heart; but I knew it could not mean much to you, because as you were not supposed to be mad you had a lot of other people to talk to."

"Paul," she said softly and helplessly, "can't you guess—must I tell you?"

If a wild idea of what she was about to say crossed his mind, he put it aside at once: This was no young girl, but staid Nurse Marie, the level-headed woman who was always to the fore in every emergency:

"If you want me to know, you will have to tell me," he said:

She had gone too far now to hold back:

"It is because I love you!" she cried passionately, and flung her arms round his neck and pressed her lips against his cheek:

In a moment Paul had sprung to his feet, and Nurse Marie was almost thrown back by the violence and suddenness of his rising: He towered above her, as she knelt there at his feet, and his eyes literally blazed with wrath:

"How dare you! How dare you!" he cried, almost beside himself with passion: "How dare you say words like those to a man who has never uttered a word of love to you? Are you shameless, woman? Must I tell you that I loathe your touch,"

that every fibre of my being, every thought of love is given to a woman whom I would not even mention in your presence? How dare you tell me that you love me? Have I ever given you reason to say such a word to me?"

Nurse Marie remained on her knees for a little while, listening to this torrent as it literally poured out of Paul's mouth. Then, when he had finished, she rose and faced him. She was nearly as tall as he was, for he was not a very tall man, and her strange blue eyes looked into his.

"Have you given me no cause to speak of love to you?" she asked. "Have you not sought my company? Have you not been glad to speak to me day by day? Have you not told me that I was a help to you? And now, after all these months, you dare to tell me of a woman who has a prior claim to you? You dare to tell me of her? Why have you never spoken of her before? Why do you wait until just before the time when you wish to leave this place?"

She spoke slowly, but Paul was still too much blinded by passion to listen to the way in which she spoke, or what she wanted him to understand by it.

"I did not mention her name to you!" he cried. "Of course I did not! I was not likely to speak of *her* to you! She is so far above you that it would be desecration to speak to you of her! Do you think it was because of science alone that I came here for six months? I should not have had patience to learn, as other men learn, slowly, step by step, if it had not been because of her. Your unasked-for love is hateful to me! That you should have proffered it, lowers you in my estimation."

Nurse Marie looked at Paul quietly, without moving a muscle.

"Very well, my good gentleman!" she said. "You take the consequences upon your own head. I have told you I loved you—you rejected my love! Be careful of my hate! I will make you wish over and over again that you had never seen me!"

"I wish that now!" said Paul contemptuously.

"But you shall wish it with tears of blood!" said Nurse Marie, and she, too, blazed with a fury which made her seem like a tigress or some wild creature from the woods. "You would not have my love! You shall have all my hate! You say it is desecration to her to speak her name to me—well, if she cares for you, she will wait and wait and wait until she is

old and haggard and ugly before she ever sees you again.

"She shall wait and wait and wait," repeated Nurse Marie; "and when at last I let you go she will have married another! We women do not love for ever!"

Paul turned away, grinding his teeth in disgust. He would have left the dispensary but Nurse Marie had no intention of letting him go.

"I know all your plans," she said, with a sort of fiendish glee. "I can baulk them all. Do you know what will happen to you? You will be baulked at first, and then you will, because you have courage, console yourself, and you will say—next time they will believe me. And so you will go on until at last even your courage will fail you. Then you will begin to be moody, and you will brood over some means of escape. It will become a fixed idea with you. From a fixed idea to madness is but a very little step, a very gentle descent—you know that, my friend—and by the time I allow the plea to be a just one, you will be as mad as the rest of them, and then—I shall let you go out into the world of sane men."

Paul turned away, but her shaft had struck home. He knew only too well the danger of continual association with madmen—the danger of a fixed idea which becomes a sort of obsession! Nurse Marie knew it as well as he did. She had argued with ingenuity and knowledge. And yet what could she do? Nothing, it seemed to him.

It was the habit in the asylum for the doctors to make visits from time to time to the patients and to hear anything they had to urge. Paul had put in a petition that the Board might see him on the next day, and Nurse Marie knew it. She had waited to tell him of her love until just before he should be set free.

Paul, even now, had no great fear that they would not listen to him. He imagined that he knew what Nurse Marie would do—she would try to poison their minds against him, but he thought it very unlikely that she would succeed.

He left the dispensary without giving another look at the woman, who, he considered, had unsexed herself in avowing her unsought love for him. Love was to Paul Merrett so divine a thing that a scene like the one he had just gone through shocked him inexpressibly. Love to him only meant Evelyn, and Evelyn could no more

have spoken like this woman than she could have robbed a church!

He went to his uncomfortable, hard bed, but he could not sleep. His brain seemed so horribly active. And yet he did not want to look haggard when he appeared before the Board on the morrow. He knew that he looked far rougher than he had done on going into the asylum, but he did not realise how rough he looked until he found himself face to face with the very well-groomed doctors:

There were ten of them seated round the table, and Paul fixed his eyes on Dr. Dent, who was, as it happened, not looking his way.

"What can we do for you, sir?" asked the elder doctor.

"You can set me free, gentlemen," said Paul Merrett. "I think you can satisfy yourselves that I am no longer mad. Please ask me any question you choose."

The doctor took up a large folio which contained the account of Paul's entrance to the asylum:

"Ah!" he said; "who are you?"

"An Englishman," said Paul Merrett. "By name Ferdinand Despard."

The Board examined him concerning several things, and at the end they signified to him that they would like him to withdraw. They had all looked at him kindly, had examined his eyes, had done exactly what Paul himself would have done, and he felt no doubt as to the result. He waited in the ante-chamber for a little, thinking only of Evelyn, and as he waited he heard the swish of a long gown pass him. He looked up, and his eyes met those of Nurse Marie:

"I am going to add my testimony, my friend," she said lightly. "*Au revoir!* We shall meet again for many a long year!"

It seemed to Paul as if her face were alight with malignity. A sudden fear seized his heart: Was her threat likely to come true? He waited for what seemed to be months, and then the glass door swung open, and the oldest doctor stood before him:

"My friend," he said very kindly, "I am sorry to disappoint you, but I fear that a residence of a few months amongst us will still be necessary for you!"

A cry escaped Paul Merrett:

"Oh, no, sir; I beg of you—no!" he cried. "It is nothing but the malice of that woman!"

"There speaks the man who has lost his reason," said the doctor gently. "Nurse Marie had tears in her eyes when she spoke of you."

Paul's head fell on his breast—for a moment he stood stunned, and then he said gently enough:

"Will you see me in three months' time, sir?"

"Yes, gladly!" said the doctor. "And I hope you will be quite well by that time!"

And Paul knew that Nurse Marie had begun to do her worst!

TO SAVE THE BANK.

LADY JANE was sitting in the very plainly-furnished room that did duty for a boudoir in her house in Clarges Street. It was as simple as was Lady Jane herself, and as unpretentious; and its tables, instead of supporting the usual silver trifles, were only used for the support of some very business-like account books.

But Lady Jane was not sitting at her table doing accounts, as she so often did; she was sitting in front of the fire looking into it, as if, instead of being the plain, common sense woman that she usually was, she were evolving a daydream.

But if anyone thought that of Lady Jane, they did her an injustice. Lady Jane was making mental calculations, and the future did not look very bright.

As we have said, Lady Jane was the daughter of an impoverished Irish earl, and before her marriage she had certainly never had a five-pound note she could call her own. Then she had fallen in with George Faucit, the rich banker's only son. Her father had spoken to her about him, and she had told him plainly that she meant to be fond of the man she married. If George Faucit wanted her and she liked him she would marry him; if not—not!

The Earl stormed, but Lady Jane lifted up her sandy eyebrows and was obdurate. Then George came and pressed his own suit, and Lady Jane at once, and for always, took a fancy to him, and he to her. They each had a quality that the other could appreciate. They were strictly honest, and the end of it was that there was no happier married couple in England than Lady Jane and George Faucit:

So that now, when she sat and looked into the fire and thought of the ruin of the house of Faucit, it was with no feeling of bitterness, as a woman might have thought of it if she had married for money only, but with a feeling of genuine sorrow for her husband

and father-in-law: She knew that unless some very rich bank came to their aid Faucit's would have to close up its shutters and ruin hundreds of people, and it was only present needs that would be the cause of it.

The bank held securities which would be worth treble their present value in a few years. Lady Jane knew this, and she also knew that by one word to Sir Claude Everard Evelyn could save the whole family from ruin, and yet she was so fair-minded a woman that she would not urge Evelyn to say that word.

"Why should the girl pay the whole cost?" she was saying to herself, when the door opened and Evelyn came in.

Evelyn always looked out of place in her sister-in-law's office-like sanctum. Although she was not half so befrilled and furbelowed as she had been before her engagement to Paul, yet she looked the fashionable woman from the point of her dainty shoe to the beautiful erection on the top of her head. Lady Jane, who wore her sandy hair turned back and plaited into a sort of coronet on her head, looked almost masculine beside her lovely sister-in-law.

Evelyn came in and took her seat beside Lady Jane, who still sat looking into the fire.

"Well, Jane," she said, "this beats everything! Have you given up your account books already this morning?"

"Yes," answered Lady Jane. Her voice was decidedly mournful.

"How are the boys—when are they coming home?" asked Evelyn.

"Oh, they are well enough, and they will be home before Easter!" said Lady Jane despondingly.

"What is the matter, Jane? You look ill!"

"And you are looking wretchedly ill," returned Lady Jane. "Evelyn, fretting is not becoming, even to a beauty!"

A little quiver of Evelyn's proud lip showed that things had been going rather hard with her. "I don't fret for nothing," she said. "It is more than six months now since I heard from Paul."

"But he prepared you for six months' absence," said matter-of-fact Lady Jane.

"It is nine now," said Evelyn unsteadily. "I don't believe he is alive, Jane—that's the truth!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Jane. "Why should he not be?"

"The only reason that I say so is that

he has kept away from me—Paul would not do that voluntarily! You do not know him as I do! I waited dinner for him, the day that the six months were up."

"I should not have," said Lady Jane calmly; "and the event proved that I should have known him better than you."

"But that makes me think he is not alive," said Evelyn.

"Why don't you try to find out something?" asked the practical Lady Jane.

"Ah, I must not do that!" said Evelyn quickly. "That makes it so terrible, Jane; I wonder I have not died myself! If you only knew what I have suffered during this last month!"

"Poor girl!" said Lady Jane, softening her usually rather loud voice. "It is trying, of course—I don't pretend to understand Paul Merrett at all, but it seems to me he ought to have turned up by this time!"

"He will never come back!" said Evelyn, with the quietness of a great despair. "I know he will never come back! And I am so strong that I shall go on living for ever and ever! I shall go on just as if I hoped that he would come back, instead of knowing he was dead!"

She covered her face with her hands and sat there quite quietly. Lady Jane had a rare gift of silence and she knew when to exercise it. She remained without speaking until Evelyn lifted her face from her hands.

"It's all no good," she said hopelessly.

"So I may just as well dry my tears and have done with it all. What was the matter with you, Jane, when I came in?"

Jane gave a short laugh.

"My heart is not broken, Evelyn," she said; "but something else will break soon if we do not do something definite—the bank must break unless some other bank comes to our aid!"

"Impossible!" cried Evelyn; her colour forsook her cheeks. "Impossible! Jane, what would become of us?"

"I don't know!" said Jane in her matter-of-fact voice. "We should give up everything to our creditors and live upon twopence halfpenny a year, I suppose; it is hard upon the boys."

"Do you really mean what you are saying?" asked Evelyn.

"I am not a joker usually," said Lady Jane grimly, "and certainly I have no wish to joke now. Those failures have ruined us!"

"Can nothing save us?"

"Yes, if some other bank would come

to our assistance!" cried Lady Jane. She looked at Evelyn, and Evelyn understood.

"I sent Sir Claude Everard away six months ago," she said quietly.

"I thought you had," said Lady Jane; "at least, it was not my conjecture at all, to be strictly truthful. I met Sir Claude yesterday and he all but told me."

"I did not know he was back from Cairo," said Evelyn.

"Nor I! I was greatly surprised at seeing him; but his first words showed me that foreign travel had not done much for him. He asked after you the moment I gave him an opportunity."

"I suppose you told him that Paul was still absent?" said Evelyn bitterly.

"No," answered Lady Jane, "I did not. I was so overjoyed to see him."

"Why?" asked Evelyn icily.

"Because I knew that he was about the only man who could help us! I hear he has been making ten fortunes over this new South American loan!"

"He was always one of the lucky ones!" said Evelyn; and then she was silent for a moment. "Look here, Jane," she began, after a moment's quiet. "Look here! I am not going to be the price!"

"I have not asked you to be, as yet," said Lady Jane. "That is a matter in which you must judge for yourself. I don't think you would make a good poor woman—your tastes are too expensive!"

Evelyn did not answer, and Lady Jane spoke again.

"Look here!" she said. "I want to tell you that I understand you better than you think I do. I know you love Paul Merrett, but I know you will want to help your father and us all, if you can. But one thing I say to you and that is—do not make an unhappy marriage for all our sakes. We shall get on somehow—you do as you like!"

"I tell you," cried Evelyn—"I tell you that I am sure Paul is dead! He would never have stayed away from me beyond his word if he could have helped it! No, he is dead, and I do not defraud him by marrying another man."

The older woman looked at the younger, and said:

"Don't you think you are giving him up rather soon? It would be hard on you to promise yourself to someone else, and then to find out that he was still alive. For, I take it, you love Paul Merrett still?"

"Still, and always!" said the girl.

"Whom I marry will have to remember that!"

There was a pause, and then Lady Jane said:

"Sir Claude is coming to see me this morning. Please to remember, Evelyn, I knew nothing of your coming! I wanted to ask him about the loan."

Evelyn smiled.

"Oh, I exonerate you from such a vulgar thing as taking an interest in a love story," she said, ending with a sigh. "I will leave you, Jane, to your business talk—I have some shopping to do, and then I will look in and see Sir Claude when I return."

She ran down the steps and into her carriage. She sank back luxuriously and covered herself with the costly fur rug.

"No," she said to herself, "I cannot be poor. I could not live if I were poor—except with Paul, and he is dead!"

She thought of Sir Claude all that afternoon, as she drove about from shop to shop. She had sent him away a month after Paul had left her, telling him that she would listen to no man whilst Paul was away. Sir Claude had come back, of course, as soon as the six months were up, but where was Paul? Evelyn recognised that Sir Claude had done all that a gentleman ought to have done, and that, if he began to woo her now, she ought not to complain.

And it appeared that Sir Claude had come just in the very nick of time! The Faucits were all looking for him—he was here in England, probably closeted with Lady Jane in Clarges Street at this moment! Lady Jane would feel all the happier now she knew that Evelyn thought no more of Paul Merrett.

After driving about all the afternoon, thinking over all these things, Evelyn was no nearer deciding what to do than she had been before. And yet she must decide something—something definite must be done. She knew that drifting was a fatal thing to do, and yet she was no nearer to coming to a decision when she went up the soft carpet of the stairs that led to the Clarges Street drawing-room than she had been before.

However, Evelyn did not hesitate, but walked straight in. She found Sir Claude standing in the Englishman's favourite attitude, with his back to the fire, looking very handsome and earnest. Lady Jane was seated at the business-like writing-table that she affected. A pink spot on

either cheekbone showed that the interview had cost Lady Jane something. Both turned as Evelyn entered the room—she knew that they had been talking about her, but that was to be expected.

Sir Claude came forward to greet her, all the joy he felt at seeing her again visible in his manly face. She felt pleased, too—she had always liked him, and just now, when everything about her life seemed to be changing, it was a great thing to see again the man who was stable and unchanging.

"I am glad to see you again!" she said to Claude.

"Are you?" His face lighted up: "And I am so happy that I can find no words!" he answered, with a touch of genuine feeling.

Jane got up and deliberately left the room—the Earl's daughter was rather crude in her behaviour sometimes. Evelyn knew that her sister-in-law had probably said that she would leave her alone with Sir Claude, and she was promptly doing it.

Sir Claude looked at her.

"I have come back, Miss Faucit," he said, "for my answer."

She turned very pale and hesitated.

"Yes," she said, after a little while:

"Yes, I know, and it is as difficult to answer you now as it was then."

"You said you were glad to see me," he urged.

"Yes, and I am!" she answered frankly:

"And I will tell you one more thing, Sir Claude—if such a person as Paul Merrett had never existed for me, I should have loved you as you would have desired to be loved. But Paul Merrett *did* come into my life, and nothing can ever wash out his memory; I say his memory, because I firmly believe he is dead."

"On what grounds?" asked the young man.

"He told me that, all being well, he would be with me six months after he left; he has not appeared. I was not to write to him; he was making a dangerous experiment and we could not communicate by letter. He has been gone three months longer than he said he would be gone. If he were alive he would be at my side!"

"Of that I am quite sure," said Sir Claude; and then he hesitated. "Miss Faucit," he said, "I am not usually a man who is contented to be second best, but I see it is the only way in which I could hope to win you. Will you be my wife? I will offer you an engagement of six months—

so that we may give Mr. Merrett every chance. I may add that I am to have the pleasure of helping your father in this present crisis, but that my help is not at all conditional on your accepting my offer. You are entirely free to choose. I am pledged to Lady Jane to help 'Faucit's.' I tell you this," he added, his voice trembling with eagerness, "because I love you so well that I would not have you think I should buy my bride. Indeed, but for your admission that, with the exception of one man, you prefer me to anyone else, I should not have offered myself to you!"

"Thank you!" said Evelyn: "Sir Claude, I can only feel that I am fortunate in having you to love me."

And so the engagement was entered into, and the house of Faucit was saved; and the weeks turned into months until another six months had elapsed, and Evelyn had fixed the date of her wedding to Sir Claude Everard.

PAUL'S ESCAPE.

IT took Paul Merrett quite a little time to realise that men whose knowledge of lunacy was so great should not be able to distinguish the sane from the insane; but when he did realise that they would rather take the words of a vindictive woman than his, he looked round for a means of letting Evelyn know what had become of him.

If he could but get a letter to her! He knew that the patients were allowed pen and paper—particularly the more rational ones—but he did not think that the letters they wrote were ever allowed to reach the outside world. But he thought to himself that he might perhaps bribe a keeper, and that he would get the letter conveyed to Evelyn somehow.

He sat down to write and explained the situation to Evelyn. He kept back the passionate utterances, the words of love; he gave her a lucid account of his difficulty, and told her what to do, and then he asked a keeper to post the letter.

The keeper promised to, and Paul waited days and days for something to come, some answer to his note. Evelyn, he knew, would act at once; but he waited a fortnight, and at the end he found himself confronted by Nurse Marie. She held something white in her hand. Paul thought it was an answer to his letter, and grew almost frantic at sight of it.

"My good friend," she said mockingly, "see how I look after your interests. We do not like letters sent to the absent friends of our mad patients—the board does not wish them to be troubled by the efforts of their clouded brains. I intercepted your letter; here it is; you express yourself very well—for a lunatic!"

She handed him back the letter which he thought was to gain him deliverance with a mocking curtsy; and then he began to despair. He lost flesh and, despite his courage, began to look gloomy; the keepers, who liked him, thought his madness increasing and pitied him. There was nothing for him to do but to wait for the next board meeting.

He was taken before it to be examined, and forced himself to seem calm, but he could not prevent his anxiety from appearing on his sharpened face. He told himself that if the doctors had found him mad before, there was but little hope for him now. However, he did not despair until he saw Nurse Marie enter the doctors' room—then he knew there would be no chance for him.

Nurse Marie had entered the board-room with a look of triumph on her face.

"You see I was right, gentlemen," she said. "I told you that he was insane—now you must have seen for yourself that he has got very thin—his mania is developing into melancholia! I foresaw that it would!"

"He seems very sane to talk to," said Doctor Dent, "and he is not violent. I feel half-inclined to let the man go."

"We do not know his relatives," said Nurse Marie; "and although he may not hurt anyone, one never knows whether or no he might not hurt himself. These cases are never safe."

"No, they are not," answered the doctor: "Well, we will keep him a little while longer—another three months will not make much difference to him."

Doctor Dent took the trouble to tell his patient that he thought that a little longer sojourn at Longvol would be beneficial to him.

Paul turned very pale and looked away—he would not let the doctor see that the tears had rushed into his eyes.

"I assure you that I am sane," he said, after a pause; and the doctor said soothingly:

"I know, my dear fellow—you are all sane, but still you had better stay with us a little longer!"

It was no more than Paul had expected after seeing Nurse Marie go into the board-room, and his despair was so great that he felt really ill. A sort of influenza was going the round of the asylum and he fell a victim to it without greatly caring about it, either. He began to lose nerve as he began to lose hope. The days passed slowly and monotonously, and he made up his mind that at the next meeting of the doctors he would not go through the farce of asking to be let out. But at the next meeting the doctors remembered him, and spoke to Nurse Marie about him of their own accord—and this time Nurse Marie had more to tell them about him than before, seeing that he had been some little time in the infirmary.

When Paul was about again, he felt weak and hopeless. The strong man was reduced to such a state that he would cry like a child. He would go out into the garden, for Summer had come round again, and sit for hours without speaking a word. Fortunately for him he had still retained the goodwill of the keepers, who pitied him thoroughly. They thought that he was going melancholic, and they also thought that he would not be long for this world. They used to let him sit by himself without troubling him, by the hour together.

And Paul had lost much courage, for the thought that beset him night and day was the thought that by this time Evelyn would have given him up for dead, and that even if he ever returned to England, it would be to find that she, for whom he had exposed himself to danger so heedlessly, had become Sir Claude's wife. That thought almost sent him as mad as the doctors could have wished to see him, and it troubled him night and day.

It was almost a year after he had first come to Longvol when he was one day seated in the gardens. He was thinking of Evelyn as usual and of the doctors' refusal to let him go. Suddenly a bird overhead struck up a long, jubilant song. Paul listened with envy, the bird was free—could go where he would—whilst he was pent up in the walls of what was really a prison.

The bird finished its song and sped its flight towards a grove of trees that stood near the wall of the asylum. And then suddenly a thought came to Paul. He had only just come out into the gardens—there would be a clear three hours before he would be missed. He had been an athlete at college, and he could easily climb

those poplars and let himself down the other side of the wall. Once free of the asylum he might reach Paris before his flight would be discovered, and once in Paris he knew that he could establish his identity.

The chaplain to the Embassy had been his friend at college. If Paul found him and told him his story, things would soon be righted.

This seemed nothing less than a direct inspiration to Paul. He rose from his seat, walking slowly so as not to attract the attention of anyone passing. He made towards the grove of trees, threw himself down under one of them as if seeking for shade. In the distance he could see the flutter of Nurse Marie's dress. Paul knew that she always kept a kind of look-out for her victim, but to-day she passed quickly to the infirmary. He guessed that there was someone very ill, and that the attentions of nurse and doctor would probably be concentrated upon the sick person. Now seemed to be the appointed time.

Paul plunged into the grove, selected his tree, and swarmed up the trunk with the agility of a cat. There was no one stirring. He dropped down the other side and walked quietly away, trying to keep as unconcerned a face as possible in case he should meet anyone.

He had not a coin in his pocket, and he could not risk being seen at a railway station and being taken up for traveling without a ticket.

Paris was fifteen miles distant. He reckoned that he could walk it in four hours. At the outside, he could not hope to remain without being missed for more than three hours and a half. The search for him in the asylum would take about half-an-hour. But if they did not seek him earnestly it might take a little more. Therefore he would be still four miles distant from Paris when his pursuers found out that he was gone.

On his side he had one advantage, however, and that was that the authorities in the asylum, believing him to be mad, would be more likely to search for him in the country round than near a town. They would probably believe that he would avoid a town until hunger compelled him to go into one. That is what he would have argued, he thought, and it was about the right line of argument.

Paul walked on all through that warm Summer day showing no signs of heat or

fatigue. He knew that he looked rough, but he also knew that to an unprejudiced eye he could not look mad! He felt faint with hunger often and inclined to beg a piece of bread, but he put self-restraint upon himself. It was not worth while chancing the bartering away of the whole of his future happiness for a mess of pottage.

As he approached the big city he became less noticed by the passers-by, who had at first looked at him with a little curiosity. But it is not an unusual thing to see a shabby wayfaring man on the road to Paris, and Paul had resolved to speak English if he should be accosted.

He had left the asylum at about eleven in the morning. He would be missed at about two, when they had their roll-call, if not before. And he did not reach Paris until four in the afternoon, having gone out of his way some few times, being afraid to ask it of anyone. He pressed on, at last, until he almost ran when he came to the street in which the Embassy is situated.

By this time a new fear took possession of him. Suppose Ferguson had left the Embassy? What would become of his plan then? But when he asked of the man who opened the door whether Ferguson was to be seen, and the man answered in the affirmative, Paul felt that he would willingly have embraced him.

"What name, sir?" asked the functionary, looking at Paul with something like surprise. He did not look like the men who usually came to the Embassy.

"Dr. Paul Merrett," said Paul briefly; "and tell him that I must see him at once!"

The functionary decided that his voice did not match his appearance, for he had been well trained and knew a gentleman when he heard him speak. In a moment Paul was ushered into the chaplain's room.

"Merrett, my dear fellow, where have you come from?"

"Give me food and a wash and I will tell you," said Paul; "but, for pity's sake, let no person in until I have told you my story!"

Ferguson stared at him. In the old Oxford days it had been Paul Merrett who was always the staid, steady-going person, in earnest over everything, but chiefly over his work. But he was a discerning person, and he took Paul to his own room and gave him what he wanted. Paul and he were about the same size, and he rigged Paul out in a suit of his own clothes,

and let him enjoy a good shave and a cold bath. After which he briefly said:

"I heard you had disappeared. Where have you been, old man?"

"In a lunatic asylum!" said Paul briefly: "Give me some food and I will tell you all about it! I have broken loose to-day, and my one fear is that they will get at me and take me back!"

He looked at Ferguson as he spoke, and he saw an involuntary shrinking; he burst into a bitter laugh.

"For Heaven's sake don't look at me as if you thought I might be mad, Ferguson!" he cried—"if you don't want me to go mad in real earnest!"

Ferguson recovered himself.

"I only started back out of sheer amazement," he said. "I remembered the peculiar lucidity of your brain at Oxford. I will give you some food, old man, and then you will tell me your story."

Paul was famished; he sat down and began to eat, and gradually his expression changed, and he laid down his knife and fork.

"Now for a smoke, you good Samaritan!" he cried, "whilst I tell you all about it!"

Ferguson gave him a cigar, and Paul leant back in the easy-chair and began to smoke, then suddenly he said:

"Look here, Ferguson, do you want to know all about it?"

Ferguson nodded, and Paul began:

"You know how horribly interested I was always in my profession, and how the study of lunacy attracted me—well, it so happened that I was going to be married—"

He stopped short, it was difficult to talk about Evelyn to anyone, but Ferguson nodded.

"Go on," he said; "I know."

Then a terrible dread shook Paul Merrett:

"Is she married, Ferguson?"

"I believe so—I saw something about it in the papers some days ago. They send me the English papers, you know—and she is a well-known beauty, is she not? I cannot remember the date, but I think it was to be about this time!"

Paul covered his face with his hands and sat silent. This had been his haunting thought, but now the thought had become a certainty, and he did not know whether it would not be better to be back at Longvol, where he had not been sure of anything. He sat silent, letting his long-coveted cigar go out, and the sound of Ferguson

puffing his was the only sound to be heard. After some minutes of silence Paul went on in an even voice:

"I wanted to marry her—and the way to promotion seemed so slow: It was not money that I wanted for her, for I have plenty of that, but I wanted to make a great name for her. Then one day at the hospital I saw a case of mania which interested me: I had a theory about it, and it developed on my lines. I conceived the thought of getting into an asylum as a patient and studying the lunatics as one of themselves: I knew I should learn all I wanted to know: I took in the board of doctors—it was not for nothing that I knew all the ways of lunacy—and I learnt all that there was to learn; and then I wanted to get out, but, oh! Ferguson, what do you think? There was a nurse there who had found out that I was not mad, and she took a liking to me: She proposed to come with me—she actually had the effrontery to make love to me; and when I spurned her love, she revenged herself by telling the board I was mad! For more than six months I endured this torment, and to-day, instead of waiting for the doctors, I made my escape, and here I am!"

He gave a sigh, and then suddenly all that he had suffered came back to him with the thought that, after all, he had lost her who had been the primary cause of his exposing himself to such danger. A great sob broke from him.

"And I have lost her!" he said. "I have lost her, and what good is all knowledge to me now?"

A COSTLY PRESENT.

EVELYN passed that Summer wondering whether, after all, some wicked fairy had not come in and changed her whilst she was asleep! For here was she, who had loved Paul Merrett more even than women usually love the men they marry, acquiescing tranquilly in her marriage with another man!

The girl could not understand how it was she could do it, but she did it all the same: She went down to his place in the country with him; she overhauled his town house; she even ordered her new clothes and accepted Sir Claude's presents with a sort of far-off feeling, as if she were not really herself at all.

But she lost flesh steadily that Summer, and it was no exaggeration to say that she

looked wretchedly ill. Sir Claude did not look much better. Indeed, the young man loved her so devotedly that many a time he had been on the point of offering her her freedom. One day, when he had come by chance into Lady Jane's rooms in Clarges Street, and had seen Evelyn lying with her face buried in the cushions, he had said to her very quietly and calmly :

"Evelyn, why go on with this ? You are unhappy, my dearest ?"

She had sprung to her feet at his first words, and had tried to shake off her sorrow, but it lay upon her too heavily, and in the end she could not shake it off. She had gone to the further end of the room and had thrown herself into a chair, and he could see her slender shoulders shaking with the sobs she could not withhold.

He was beside her in a moment.

"Let us finish this !" he said. "I cannot marry a woman who does not care for me."

"I do care for you," she said after a while, when she had grown calmer, "only I want him back so badly ! I felt to-day as if I would give the whole of my life just to look upon his face once more. Surely you are not jealous of a dead man, Claude ?"

"I *am* jealous of a dead man !" he had said fiercely. "I would rather be dead and have you think of me as you think of him, than be alive and be going to marry you as you are now !"

He had spoken passionately, and for a moment they were both too overcome to speak. Then she grew calmer.

"I am very sorry," she said penitently. "I am very sorry, Claude—I did not mean to let you see my grief. Now, you must forget that you have seen it. I feel as if I were doing you an injustice by marrying you, but I give you my word that there is not in this world a living man whom I like so much as you."

"That must content me, I suppose," he sighed. "Evelyn, you do not know the sting of 'like' when one wants love !"

She was careful not to let him see her in any grief after that, but he always seemed to divine it ; and so their wedding-day drew near, and Evelyn caught herself wishing sometimes that it were well over and that she were beginning her new life with Claude Everard. Her present life was intolerable.

John Faucit was delighted. He had always wanted Evelyn to marry Sir Claude, to whom he felt that he owed a deep debt of gratitude for having come forward when

he did and saved the credit of the house. Lady Jane had the greatest admiration for Claude, and she often wondered why her sister-in-law should waste so many regrets upon Paul Merrett, when Sir Claude was in every way so much his superior. But she was very good to Evelyn—indeed, they all were ; and so the quick days passed and Evelyn found herself on the eve of her wedding-day.

In her daydreams, when she had thought of marriage with Paul, she had always wanted her wedding to take place at Castle-ton, where John Faucit had an estate. Now that she was actually to marry Sir Claude, she wished the ceremony to take place in one of the London churches. In the old days she had dreamt of few people surrounding her at that supreme moment of her life—now she wanted all the world and his brother to be there. London did nothing but talk about the wedding, and the Society papers had been full of it for the last month, and now she had actually come to the very day before her wedding—the evening before she started on her new life.

This one evening she was to spend alone at home. Sir Claude was not to see her. She dined with her father and brother and sister-in-law.

After dinner Sir Claude Everard was announced. He had just driven up to the house accompanied by another man. He was shown up into Evelyn's boudoir.

Sir Claude's face was deathly white and his eyes were burning—he looked as unlike his handsome, calm self as he could possibly look. In a few moments, the door opened and Evelyn came in. She wore a loose white tea-gown, and her eyes looked very dark and full of unshed tears.

"You wanted to see me, Claude ?" she said.

He took her by the hand and led her to the middle of the room, which was lit up by soft electric lights. He looked down at her.

"You are very pale, my poor love," he said gently. "You are thinking about to-morrow, and it frightens you to think of the long years you are going to spend with a man whom you do not love. It is that which makes you so pale, is it not ?"

She drooped her head a little.

"Yes," she said ; "it is that a little and recollections of the man I loved and who is dead. But after to-night you shall see no more of it. I shall never let you regret to-morrow, Claude—I promise you that !"

"I will believe you," he said ; and then

he stopped a moment and turned his head towards the door as if he had heard the sound of a footstep. She, too, seemed to have heard something, for she raised her head and looked at him for a moment; then she began to tremble:

"Why have you come to-night, Claude?" she asked piteously. "I was to have this one evening to myself, you know."

"To think of Paul Merrett," he said quietly.

"Ah!" she cried, with a quick catch of her breath. "Ah! You must not grudge him this one evening, Claude; after this evening they all belong to you."

Sir Claude's face contracted as with pain:

"I have not told you what you asked me, Evelyn," he said, so gravely that she looked up into his face.

She saw his pallor and her conscience smote her:

"You are ill—you are suffering?" she said.

"I am not ill—but I am suffering!" he made answer, still speaking in those quiet, even tones. "Evelyn, I have come to bring to you my wedding-present. Dear, I know you will cherish it and not only because it comes from me; and, perhaps sometimes, when the years pass over our heads, you will remember that the present I bring you will have cost me so much, that I am sure no man ever gave the woman he loved a costlier present."

Then suddenly the door opened: Her eyes turned towards it, and she gave a cry which rang through the house, and which resounded in Sir Claude's ear often and often again since that night. A cry, and then suddenly she felt Paul's arms round her, and she felt as if everything in the whole world were leaving her:

* * * * *

The news of Paul Merrett's return and of the breaking off of the marriage arranged between Evelyn Faucit and Sir Claude Everard spread like wildfire through Society, and the talk was great, although the chief actors had left town.

Evelyn begged her father to let them all go down to Castleton where she could be married quietly, and where they could live until Paul Merrett could write his great book; and John Faucit consented. With bad grace, it is true, but still he consented. The only person whom Evelyn saw before leaving town was Sir Claude, whom she prayed to come to her.

The young man had never done quite so

hard a thing as to obey her summons; nevertheless, because he was a man and could bear his suffering like a man, he came:

She walked into the room with her hands stretched out and with the purest pity in her eyes; he took her hands in his and held them very tight for a few moments, and bent his head over them, but he did not kiss them; and when he raised his head, she saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"Are you happy now, my dear?" he asked tenderly. "Are you happy now?"

"No!" she cried, with a sudden burst of pain. "No! How can I be happy and you so miserable!"

"I?" he smiled. "I? Oh, it does not matter much about me, you know! I shan't go out into the wilds and shoot big game as is the fashion in books! I shall go down to my bank every day and immerse myself in business. I shall be all right, never fear! Don't you trouble yourself about me! And be happy—as happy as the day is long! Don't let my present to you, which has cost me so much, bring you no happiness! That would be an ill return."

"Would it?" she asked gently. "Would it? Ah, but I shall be happy with him—it is only for you that I grieve. Forgive me, Claude, all the pain I have caused you."

"Indeed, there is nothing to forgive," he said simply, and left her.

Paul and Evelyn were married by special license a few weeks after, and they settled down quietly and let the world talk. And in course of time the great book was written, and Paul found himself famous, and Evelyn felt that the world recognised Paul as one of her great men. But neither he nor she ever forgot that year's agony they spent, and Evelyn sighs when she looks at Paul's prematurely grey hair.

As for Sir Claude, he never married, but has taken a great fancy to Evelyn's eldest boy, who, he says, is to be his heir; and even without that, both Paul and Evelyn are glad that the man who gave up so much should have comfort in their children: Lady Jane is as practical as ever and the mainstay of "Faucit's." The only person who grumbles occasionally is John Faucit, who now and again mutters to himself:

"So like a woman—she chooses the one and leaves out the really fine fellow!"

But if he had said it out loud, they would all have agreed, for they all know that Sir Claude, who has been left far behind in the race for this world's happiness, is before all "A fine fellow!"

Half-Minute Stories.

The Brightest and Best Little Stories of all Times.

The little stories in this feature are not all new—you may label some "chestnuts," but it should be remembered that what are chestnuts to you may not be chestnuts to others. And, after all, there are worse things in the world than chestnuts. They are nuts that never lose their flavour; Time keeps them sweet, and what Time preserves is generally worth keeping. Anecdotes for these pages are welcomed, and should be sent to "Half-Minute Stories," THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. In all cases the source of the stories must be given.

A HELPFUL SERMON.

A MINISTER recently preached a sermon, and illustrated his point by saying :

"You know how to plant roses in the sunshine, and heliotrope and geraniums, but if you want your fuchsias to grow you must keep them in a shady nook."

After the sermon a woman came up to him, her face glowing with pleasure.

"Oh, I am so grateful for that sermon," she said, clasping his hand and shaking it warmly.

His heart glowed for a moment—only for a moment though.

"Yes," she went on fervently, "I never knew before what was the matter with my fuchsias."

A BIT TOO CLEAN.

CLEANLINESS is a virtue, no doubt, but, like other virtues, it may be carried to a vicious excess. So it happened with an old fisherman in Nartle, Devon, who made it one of the chief aims of his life to keep his boat immaculate.

On one occasion a gentleman had hired him to take himself and a young lady out for an afternoon's fishing. The boat could not be brought near enough to the shore for them to step in, so the old sailor removed his shoes and stockings, and taking the young lady in his arms was about to deposit her in the boat when he caught sight of some mud on her pretty pair of boots.

Instantly he stooped and dipped both her feet up to the ankles in the sea, paddling them backwards and forwards to remove the mud, in spite of the protests of the owner. His only remark as he finally put her on board was :

"Bless yer, miss, salt water won't hurt yer !"

AN APPRECIATED ACTION.

IN a large warehouse in a Scottish city, a worthy official, who had served his employers faithfully for over twenty years, thought he would like a change of scene and occupation in the South of England.

Accordingly, he sent in his resignation, which was accepted with regret.

His fellow employees, by whom he had always been highly respected, raised among themselves a purse of one hundred sovereigns, which the senior partner of the firm presented to him in a neat, choice speech.

"Weel," said the recipient, as he pocketed the purse and rose to thank the donors, "I dinna ken how I can thank ye for this magneeficent present. I'm sure I never thocht I was sae weel like't until this meenit, an' noo, when I see ye a' sae kind an' sorry at the prospect o' losin' me, I—I think I'll just stop amang ye, an' no gang awa' at a' !"

And stop he did, and he's there still !

THE CAPTURED CLIENT.

SIR GEORGE LEWIS says that a legal friend of his owes his rise to a smart office-boy. When this friend was a briefless barrister, he went one afternoon to read in the Inner Temple Library. He had not been there long when his office-boy appeared in a state of breathless excitement.

"If you please, sir," he gasped, "a gentleman is waiting for you at the chambers with a brief. I've locked him in, so he can't go away before you get back."

The barrister and the boy hurried to the chambers, and the gentleman with a brief, who was much amused at his capture, afterwards became a most valuable client.

DROPPING A FEE.

SIR RICHARD JEBB used to tell the following anecdote of himself :

He was attending a nobleman from whom he had a right to expect a fee of five guineas ; he received only three. Suspecting some trick on the part of the secretary from whom he received it, he at the next visit contrived to drop the three guineas.

They were picked up, and again deposited in his hand ; but he still continued to look on the carpet. His lordship asked if all the guineas were found.

"There must be two guineas still on the carpet," replied Sir Richard, "for I have but three." The hint was taken.



NO WONDER.

FARMER : "Look here, you ! You remember putting two lightning rods on my barn a while back, don't you ? Well, that barn was struck six weeks after and burnt down."

"Struck by lightning ?" replied the man who had fixed the rods.

"It was."

"In the day-time ?"

"No, at night."

"Must 'a' been a dark night, wasn't it ?"

"Yes, dark as pitch."

"Lanterns burning ?"

"What lanterns ?"

"Didn't you run lanterns up 'em on dark nights ?"

"Never heard o' anything like that."

"Well, if you don't know enough to keep your lightning rods showin', you needn't blame me. Good morning !"



THE NOVELIST'S JOKE.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS was one day the guest of Dr. Gistal, a leading practitioner in Marseilles. After dinner, while the coffee was being handed round, the host requested the great novelist to enrich his album with one of his witty improvisations.

"Certainly," replied Dumas with a smile ; and drawing out a pencil, he wrote, under the eyes of his entertainer, the following lines :

Since Dr. Gistal came to our town,

To cure diseases casual and hereditary,

The hospital has been pulled down—

"You flatterer !" here exclaimed the doctor, mightily pleased ; but the poet went on :

And we have made a larger cemetery.

MALAPROP STORIES.

DR. CLIFFORD, the eminent Nonconformist divine, is a very fine speaker. On one occasion he delivered a lecture in a Shropshire village in his very best style. An old lady was so overcome by the Doctor's eloquence that, on leaving the building after the lecture, she exclaimed to a friend : "Well, I must say he's the greatest *oratorio* I ever heard !"

An Australian gentleman had a servant who was much addicted to malapropisms. The master went out one day, and on his return asked if there had been any callers during his absence.

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "A gentleman came."

"Did he leave any message ?"

"No, sir, he said it did not *magnify*, he would come and *insult* you in the morning."

Readers are invited to contribute stories of a similar nature to the above. Payment will be made for any *new* and *original* ones published. Anecdotes should be sent to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than July 5th. Envelopes must be marked "Malaprop" in the top left-hand corner.



A FRIEND IN NEED.

SMITH : "Hallo, how do you do, Brown ? I say, old fellow, come home to dinner with me."

Brown : "Really, I am scarcely presentable in these—"

Smith : "Bother the clothes ! That's all right. My wife and I value people at their true worth, we don't go by their tailor's bill."

Smith (half-an-hour later) : "Ah, here we are ! My dear, allow me to present my friend, Mr. Brown. By-the-way, my dear, those things you told me to order I forgot all about until too late to get into the shop."

Mrs. Smith (aghast) : "What ! Forgot ! Um—um—er—it's of no consequence at all, my dear, not the least. Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Brown. What delightful weather we are having ! Please excuse me one moment."

Smith (in a whisper, after Mrs. S. has disappeared) : "Worked like a charm."

Brown : "What worked ?"

Smith : "She didn't dare say a word about my forgetting those things with company present. That's why I brought you."

Here are some good stories told of M.P.'s. They are the best of those sent in for the recent competition.

AND THEN THEY ROARED.

A WELL-KNOWN Statesman, who is renowned for his wit, was once speaking at a meeting, when a man in the audience threw a cabbage at him:

The Statesman, picking up the cabbage, said:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been told by my friends that I am a speaker of great eloquence, in fact, that when people are listening to me they are carried beyond themselves, but I feel flattered to-night, for this is the first time a man has completely lost his *head* over me."



A SMART ANSWER.

DURING the recent General Election a prominent member of Parliament was one night addressing his constituents at a rather stormy meeting, when a man interrupted by shouting out:

"Do you remember when your grandfather drove a donkey and cart?"

The candidate thought for a moment, and then quietly said:

"I have quite forgotten the cart, but I see the donkey is still alive."



PRETTY WIT.

THE late Robert Meek Carter, a worthy but somewhat uneducated man, sat in Parliament for a short time as one of the members for Leeds.

One of the few speeches he made was on the Permissive Prohibitory Bill, which was to give power to two-thirds of the ratepayers of a parish to refuse licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors. His remarks were not to the taste of the young Tory "bloods," who subjected him to much interruption:

Mr. Carter made an appeal for a patient hearing, saying:

"Mr. Speaker, I do not often trouble the House with any remarks of mine. May I, therefore, ask that honourable members will bear with me."

Unfortunately he pronounced "bear" as though spelt "beer," and his further remarks were lost in the roar of laughter which followed the witty interjection of another member—particularly pertinent considering the subject under discussion—"mild or bitter?"

HIS OWN AT LAST.

THE member for a certain county division was notorious for the way in which he used skilfully to embody in his speeches the utterances of others, not that he ever indicated that the words were not his own.

On one occasion he was giving an impassioned and flowery oration in his usual fashion, but was decidedly annoyed when he heard, from time to time, a well-read colleague behind him pointing out the source of the choice bits: "That's Macaulay!" "That's Gladstone!" "That's Bright!"

At last he could stand it no longer, and burst out:

"Mr. Speaker, I appeal to you for protection: An honourable member behind me——"

"That's himself!" came promptly from the same honourable member.



WILLING TO RISK IT.

A NEW member of Parliament was once speaking at a political gathering to a large audience, most of whom were opposed to his views.

Happening to mention a scheme in which he was much interested, he was greeted with shouts of disapproval. The noise excited him, and he thundered out:

"Is no one with me in this matter? Will no one go with me?"

There was a moment's pause, then a voice came from the back of the room:

"Will no one go with the gentleman? Then I'll go with him: I ain't afraid!"



FREE FROM IT.

A YOUNG member of a well-known noble house once launched forth into a venomous attack upon a Minister who was, at the moment, absent through illness. One of the Minister's colleagues thereupon rose to defend the absentee, and began his speech:

"Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grieved to hear the attack which an honourable member has just made upon my honourable friend. It is the more ungenerous as the absent member is known to be suffering from an attack of an illness from which the honourable member opposite is quite immune."

The House roared, for the Minister in question had brain-fever!

F. A. F. STORIES.

WANTED TO KNOW.

ALTHOUGH many London children know something of the sights of the country, there are hundreds who do not. One of the latter was once away on a FRESH AIR FUND outing, when he saw a Canadian goose strolling across a meadow.

"Please, sir," he inquired, "is that a hostrich?"

HE GOT THE PENNY.

THE Oldham children were just separating after their excursion when one little boy was found to be sobbing bitterly.

Inquiry as to the cause of his grief elicited the reply:

"Please, sir, I left a bar of rock in the train."

He had bought this sticky comestible at Lytham to take home to a younger brother. One of the helpers, in order to comfort him, gave him a penny with which to buy another bar of rock.

"Please, sir," said the boy, "it were a tuppenny 'un."

He got another penny:

THE GREEDY SEA.

ABOUT 1000 poor children were taken from Blackburn to the seaside for a day. Many of them had never seen the sea before, and had no idea of the tides.

Some went bathing, leaving their clothes at the water's edge, and as the tide was coming in it carried the garments away.

When they had finished their dip the boys looked for their clothes, and not finding them, about twenty, in Nature's garb, came up to a helper, saying:

"Please, sir, someone has stolen our clothes."

It was soon apparent what had really happened. The question then was what must be done. The children could not return to Blackburn as they were.

The naked little urchins were collected together, and then the big drum was beaten for a few minutes.

Soon a crowd of seaside visitors gathered. The circumstances were explained to them, and it was not long before big piles of clothes were forthcoming. In these the boys were dressed, and many of them went home in much better garments than those in which they had arrived:

HOW IT WAS DECIDED.

IN one of Sheffield's poorest schools all the FRESH AIR FUND tickets had been disposed of

except one; for this one ticket there were two boys, who apparently equally deserved it.

"Well!" said the teacher, in a jocular way. "I don't know how we can decide this; I think you had better toss up for it."

Without a moment's hesitation one of the ragged boys dived his hand into his trousers pocket and produced a penny.

"That settles it," said the teacher; "if you are so well off, the other boy must have the ticket."

REAL DEVOTION.

AMONG the crowd of children waiting to catch the special train from Cardiff to Barry Island a blind boy was noticed. One of the helpers, hardly knowing how this poor little chap was to be amused all day, said:

"What is this blind boy doing here?"

At once a bright little fellow stepped forward, and said:

"Please, sir, he's with me."

"Are you going to look after him all the time?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

The long day wore slowly through. The two were inseparable. It was most touching to watch the care with which the boy who could see looked after his sightless companion. It must have cost him many a pang, too, to be unable to join in the games of the other boys. He was only a boy from the slums, yet he gave up his holiday for the sake of the sightless chum who had even fewer opportunities of enjoying himself.

HARD LUCK.

THE Newcastle-on-Tyne children generally have their outings at the seaside.

On one occasion, after all the children had gone into the tea-tent and were busily engaged with the good things provided, a helper strolled outside, and seeing something black bobbing about in the sea, went to the water's edge and saw, to his surprise, that it was a boy's head.

He asked the boy what he was doing there, and why he had not gone with the others to tea, to which the reply was:

"Please, sir, somebody's ran off with my clothes."

AN EXPRESSION OF THANKS.

ONE ragged little girl of six years, on returning home from an outing, waited outside the schoolroom, her face all covered with dirt, and, looking up to the Superintendent of the outing, said :

"Div me a kiss."

"Why do you want me to kiss you, little girl?"

"'Cause I's enjoy'd meself so much and is so happy."

The Superintendent bent down and went through the ordeal of kissing the poor little gutter girl, and the onrush was so great that he had to bolt.



LANCASHIRE WONDER.

A PARTY of Lancashire children was once taken to Bramhall, near Stockport, where the fields, the thick hedgerows and banks covered with wildflowers (which they might actually pick) were sources of great attraction.

The orchards of fruit-trees, however, caused many wondering glances. On the return journey the secretary heard one little fellow say to another :

"Eh! look, Sam! Pe-ers grooving on threes!"

This was said with such innocence that the hearer had no doubt that the boy had never thought before of the luscious fruit growing in this way.



EASILY AMUSED.

THE task of amusing the children on the outings is not very great, for they usually find plenty of ways of looking after themselves.

A party of boys were out on a very breezy day, and the wind caused considerable amusement. They had competitions as to whose cap the wind would blow furthest, with the result that a number of them returned home minus their headgear.



A MATTER FOR SURPRISE.

A LITTLE girl was standing on a grassy knoll, looking at the surrounding country stretched out before her. The day was beautiful, and the slum child seemed lost in admiration.

Turning round to a companion, she remarked :

"Well, I never thought there were half so many fields in the world!"

F. A. F. STORIES.

POOR LITTLE CRIPPLE.

ON one occasion, at a Cripples' Outing, a poor little, doubled-up fellow of twelve, who had to walk on two crutches, when landed in a green field from the brake, stood and looked so amazed that a helper asked :

"What's the matter, Charlie?"

"Oh, ain't it nice!"

"What's nice?"

"Hark at the birds singing; look at the flowers; ain't the trees lovely!"

"Yes, it's all very beautiful."

"Ain't I enjoying myself! Never been in the country before; never been outside of the town."

"Then you are really happy?"

"Yes, I didn't think there were so many like me."

The fact of being out with 100 more cripples made him almost forget his affliction and put fresh life into the boy.



BARLEY—OR SHRIMPS.

THE following anecdote shows very clearly how utterly ignorant some of the slum children are of country sights.

During harvest-time a party of little ones were taken out for the day by the FRESH AIR FUND. One of the children, a short distance ahead of the others, came to a field of barley, and, turning about suddenly, cried :

"Hi, Bill, Sal—here, quick! Here's a field of shrimps!"



A DISTINCTION.

A LADY helper had made herself very agreeable to the children, and one little girl in particular had taken a great fancy to her.

Before they separated for the day the child asked the lady her name. Thinking it wouldn't be of much interest, the reply was made :

"I'm a teacher (the name by which the school governesses are known)."

"Oh, I thought you were a lady!" said the child, in a tone of disappointment.



TURN BACK, PLEASE.

SOME particulars of the FRESH AIR FUND, which gives a day in the country to the poor little mites who are the subjects of the foregoing anecdotes (kindly supplied by the local Hon. Secs.), will be found on the Editor's Page.

Mr. Laurence Housman is both an artist and an author, his works being principally in the fantastic style. He it was who wrote "An Englishwoman's Love Letters," which at the time of their anonymous publication were credited to most writers of repute. In reply to my letter requesting his reasons for selecting "The King's Evil" as his best story, Mr. Housman writes: "I do not think it is an author's business to publish criticisms of his own work, but as 'The King's Evil' of all my stories is the one that I feel the greatest satisfaction at having written, I regard it as my best."

The King's Evil.

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN.

ON the night which went before His death, we know how Christ gave to His disciples an example of humility that even to this day is followed by the Kings of certain countries. This is the washing of men's feet, however lowly and poor they may be, done on Maundy Thursday, by which earthly Kings exalt themselves in striving to the pattern of their Lord's great humility:

Now, in a country where they did this, many generations ago, it had chanced that the King, being an ill ruler, and false to his crown-oaths, had been driven out and supplanted by his brother, who, if no better at heart than his predecessor, used his means of power more prudently. Thus it came about that, of the two brothers, one was a beggar with no friend to succour him, and the other lord of a great city, and of all the country lying for many leagues around it; and which one hated the other more, he who was supplanted or he who had done the supplanting, it were hard to say.

On the year following this turn-over of their fortunes, it being the morning of Maundy Thursday, the new King entered the palace-courtyard like a servant, girdled with a towel, and carrying a golden ewer in his hands. There, all about the walls, sat the beggars waiting for the King's service; and the King knelt down before each, as the custom was, and poured out water into a gold dish, and washed the feet of all:

And when he came to the last beggar of all, he found that it was his own brother, whom he hated more than aught else in the world, who had brought his feet there to be washed.

Wit ye well, the Devil was at that christening, though not a word did the brothers speak. And the King washed right foot and

left foot, and dried them with all care, as if to say: "See, you are to me even as these, mere beggars, for whom custom makes me do this thing."

Now, this that happened once, happened again each year, on Maundy Thursday, at the washing of the feet; there, last of all, sat the King dethroned, and the brother who had supplanted him came and knelt, and washed his feet as he had done for all the other beggars. And to the one it was the sweetest moment of all the year, and to the other the bitterest.

To the Devil also it became a red-letter feast-day to cheer him through the dolorous time of Easter, so great was the joy wrought for him by the hatred of the two brothers.

After some years of keeping this bitter anniversary, supplanter and supplanted disappeared from the eyes of men on one and the same day, and went the way their hearts took them. The Devil made them to be his footstool, one under his right foot and one under his left, for he would not have their hatred die for lack of remembrance.

Presently, as time went on, the Devil looked up and laughed. "Out yonder," he said, "your feast-day on earth is beginning. Come, and we will see how the little King keeps the custom that his father and uncle kept so well!"

The Devil clapped a soul into the cleft of each hoof, and went up to earth, like a diver who swims up to the surface of the deep sea:

The young King came down into the palace-courtyard, girdled with a napkin and carrying a golden ewer in his hands. His face was made holy by awe and love, because it was his first time of performing the solemn rite which had its pattern in the humility and love of Christ.

All round the walls sat the beggars with

bare feet, and the Devil sat last of them : where hatred had sat all those years before, there he crouched with feet and face folded in the brown robe of a mendicant, and waited for the washing to come to his turn :

The King was little more than a child, and to him this old, worn-out custom was the newest and strangest thing he had ever had to do with, more strange than the touching for "The King's Evil," which was done on all feast-days. He thought of the disciples in the supper-room, on the night before the Passion; and as he went from beggar to beggar he had in mind Christ with His friends the saints; so, in each one of the beggars, he washed, as it were, the feet of some saint.

"This," he said of the first, "must be Peter!" for he was a true child of the Church, and he knew that Peter must ever come foremost. So he washed Peter's feet diligently and humbly, making mental submission to all the dogmas which from then to this had infallibly come from him.

Then he passed on. "And this shall be John!" he thought, at the next, for that saint was ever the one he loved the best. Then he came to James, and then Andrew; and so he went on till he had washed all the feet down to Thomas; then there was one left. "This must be Judas," he sighed, as he knelt down to offer water to the last.

The Devil untucked his robe, and let down his two hoofs into the gold dish. The young King drew back his breath, first in disgust, and then in pure pity, at sight of those deformed feet; and he thought of Judas, and the fiery way his feet had trodden at the last. And he thought: "To all the others I have prayed; but for this one may I pray?"

Then he laved the right foot tenderly, and then the left foot tenderly, and dried them both; and at the end, "Oh, God," he said, "make these lame feet whole!" And, saying this, he stooped forward and kissed them.

The Devil uttered a cry; for the two souls which he had brought back with him out of Hell had slipped from his hold, and had passed up into the lowest room of Purgatory:

The Devil drew up his feet painfully, and wrapped them in his robe, while with the best will in the world he let his curse go out on the mortal who had so robbed him. And the young King's lips were all blistered, as he rose up from that washing a white leper:

When the people saw what had befallen, they made sure that it was from God, a sign

of His judgment on an evil house in its last generation. Therefore they made haste, and stripped the King of his royal robes, and drove him out beyond the city-walls to a leper's life among the solitary and waste places; and in his room they appointed a magistracy to rule over them, for of the royal house no male of the direct line was left.

The leper King bore all meekly, knowing that his leprosy was but a symbol of the sins of himself and of his father's house; so putting on sackcloth he went out to live in a lonely hut far from the high-road, and not near any of the farms or tilled fields.

In a path that ran hard by up to the hill-pastures he put an earthen bowl, wherein sometimes food for him was set by the charitable, and sometimes not, as might chance. And never did any man see his face.

Only one day in the seven must he come back to the place where before he had been King; and that was when all the bells rang, and at the great church in the city Mass was sung. Then he would cover his face over with a cloth, and hang the leper's bell about his neck, and go along byways, and by a side-gate, and through narrow streets till he was come to the Close and to the chancel's north side where the lepers' window was.

There he would kneel and look in, and behold the miracle of the Mass, and hear a little of the words; and quickly, after the third bell had been rung, turn and go while the streets were still void.

And if at any time he saw a man coming his way, he would sound the bell about his neck, and cry "Unclean!" So they two would pass upon opposite sides, or else the other would turn not to meet him, and draw away into a side street till he had passed by: After a time he became used to that grief and shame; and to go and hear Mass was the one joy he had with God and his fellow-man.

Now it happened, one day of High Mass, that as he was going along a poor, narrow street there was a child playing upon one of the steep flights of steps that lead up to the doors; and as the leper passed the child slipped, and cried, feeling itself falling. Then, forgetting that no help might come from him, the King put out his hand and caught the little one, and set it upon its feet.

Its mother within the house, hearing the cry, ran to the door and saw a leper handling her own flesh and blood. At that sight, between fear and rage, she threw at him the

thing that first came, then seizing up a mop-stick made out after him, dealing him many hard knocks with it, and at last casting it after him as a thing that had become unclean for further handling.

The leper bowed down his head and went on, stricken to the heart that not for the love of God might he do kind deeds to any of his fellow-creatures.

The mother picking up her child carried it in, to wash it clean from any taint of leprosy : but when she was stripping it with shrill scoldings, all at once her voice stopped at mid-word, as her eyes fell on its bared flesh, for there, where before the child had borne the marks of the "King's Evil," the skin was now whole and sound.

The next time the leper went by, a week after, a woman came carrying a child and following him, and she was a sister of the other woman whose child he had caught in its fall.

When there was no one else in the street but themselves, she came close : "Touch my child !" she whispered ; and at that the leper moved more quickly, ringing his bell to warn her off. "I am unclean !" he said. The other did not cease following, but whenever others came in sight she drew back, as if fearful lest she should be seen ; then, as soon as they two were alone again, she came saying : "For the love of God, touch my child !"

For the love of God ! The leper turned his eyes and looked. Through the cloth over his face he saw the mother uncovering the child's throat ; and there upon it was the mark of the King's Evil. "For the love of God, oh, for the love of God !" she wept.

The leper stood still ; he reached out his hand, trembling, and made the sign of the Cross over the scars. Then he turned and ran, nor did he hear the mother's cry of thankfulness, as she blessed God to behold the healing that his touch had wrought.

That day he went back out of the city by another way ; and always afterwards he crept in by a different gate, and by other streets, till he reached the lepers' window within the chancel's north side.

But one day, as he knelt looking in at the priest saying Mass, he heard footsteps behind, and saw three women coming to where he was ; and one was carrying a child in her arms, and one was leading another woman by the hand. When they were near to him the two women stood still, and said : "For the love of God, make these whole !"

"This is my only child," said one. "This is my sister," said the other, "she is a deaf mute ; the King's Evil has been upon her ever since she was born."

"I am unclean !" said the leper :

"God knows," said the mother, "if you can heal my little one, you are not unclean in His sight."

The King looked in through the lepers' window, and saw the priest about to lift up the Host ; and with the three women he bowed himself to the ground at the consecration. Then the leper looked toward the Body of Christ and prayed : "O, Love of God, come by way of the lepers' window and give healing to these !" Then he made the sign of the Cross upon each, and turned and went swiftly away.

Presently through all the city the whisper went by stealth how the leper's touch had healing in it, as if he were still King by divine right, and had power such as in old time was given to Kings to do good to God's poor on earth.

So, in a while, the sound of his bell, which was to warn men as he entered any street, served as a summons to those who had need of him to touch them for the King's Evil. Yet still, as he went through the poor crowds that blessed him, the leper-King wore the cloth over his face, and cried "Unclean !"

At first the tale of it had been slow, for there had been doubt and fear that a leper, cut off from all men by the Finger of God, should do this thing ; but presently, when the secret had passed through more than three hands, the city grew loud with it. And the cry of the poorer was : "Give us back our King ! for God, though He curses him in his own body, blesses him in all on whom he lays hands." But for a time the clergy and magistrates could not hear of such a thing as for a leper to be upon the throne.

Nevertheless the healing was apparent, for many known cases had been cured, and at last the popular cry could no longer be withstood. For each Sunday, before and after Mass, the whole city was in a tumult, as the leper-King came and went, with his face covered, and his bell ringing about his neck.

At last, seeing that his coming made strife and uproar on God's day, the leper remained in his own hut in the fields beyond the walls, and listened for the great bell to ring at the elevation of the Host :

But when it was found that he meant not

to come, but would stay in meekness apart from God's altar, then as one man the city rose up, and went and brought him back in triumph, and put on him again the royal robe, and set him upon the throne. And the thing being done, no voice small or great was lifted against it.

But the King was a leper still—and still, for all man might say, beneath his crown he wore the cloth over his face and round his neck the bell to warn men of his coming.

And as he went through the palace, where all bowed down at his approach, he still cried: "Unclean, unclean!" Nor would he allow any to touch him save it were for the cure of the King's Evil, a thing that he thought to be a special mercy which, in his sins, God had given him.

And when he went forth to Mass with a great train, and in all his royal robes, through the streets, at the church-door he and the rest parted, and they went within, but the King passed round to the lepers' window on the chancel's north side, and therethrough he heard Mass said. And from touch of him no harm came to any man; though a leper he remained, more loved by all than any king of sound body had been in the world before.

So time went on, and it was Maundy Thursday once more. Into the courtyard came the leper-King, girdled with a towel, and bearing the golden ewer; and there all round the walls sat the beggar-men waiting for 'heir feet to be washed.

The leper over his face was wearing the cloth, and as he moved the bell that was round his neck rang; and he went from one to another thanking God for having put it into his hands to do again that solemn service,

which he had never hoped could be his to do more. So going the round in meek thanksgiving he came to the last:

That one, at the King's coming, drew up His beggar's rags, and set down Feet marred and maimed into the golden dish. The leper, when he saw that, drew in his breath sharp, and trembled with exceedingness of joy; but nothing was said there. Only after the washing he stooped low, and kissed the two Wounds; and still could say no word for the bliss and comfort that had there taken hold of both body and soul. And therefrom never again could he draw his lips away, for in Them mercy and truth were met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other.

His people, seeing how the King lay low before a beggar's feet, thought he had fallen from some sickness; and going to lift him, first saw they his hands all pure of the leprosy. Then in wonder they drew the face-cloth from his face, and behold, there too all the leprosy was gone. And the bell, as they lifted him, that was about his neck, made no sound as it swung to tell men that anything unclean was in their midst; but in all ways he was the most beautiful King that ever man swathed for burial.

Within the church, and within the chancel's north side, they buried him; where the Wound was in Christ's side, there in the church they buried him; within the lepers' window, in between that and the high altar.

There until now the King's body, which was corrupt in life, stays incorruptible for the final day, when Christ shall at last appear, and lay His Finger upon all the world, and heal it of the King's Evil:

✻ ✻ LOVE ME WHILE I LIVE. ✻ ✻

*Make me no vows of constancy, my friend,
To love me, though I die, the whole life long,
And love no other till thy days shall end—
Nay, it were rash and wrong.*

*It would not make me sleep more peacefully,
That thou wert wasting all thy life in woe
For my poor sake. What love thou hast for
me
Bestow it ere I go:*

*Carve not upon a stone when I am dead
The praises which remorseful mourners give
To women's graves—a tardy recompense—
But speak them while I live.*

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*Heap not the heavy marble on my head,
To shut away the sunshine and the dew,
Let small blooms grow there, and let grasses
wave,
And raindrops filter through:*

*Thou wilt meet many fairer and more gay
Than I; but, trust me, thou canst never find
One who will love and serve thee night and day
With a more single mind.*

*Forget me when I die. The violets
Above my rest will blossom just as blue:
Nor miss thy tears—e'en Nature's self forgets,
But while I live be true!*

Dick's Sweetheart. ❀ ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By OWEN OLIVER.

A story of schoolboy honour.

DICK doesn't often get excited, because he says it's "bad form." So, when he jumped in through the dining-room window, and swung me round and round till my feet came off the ground, I knew that he had won the scholarship.

"You great donkey!" I said. "Put me down! I told you you would!"

"That's why I did it," he said with a grin. "I thought you'd like to be right for once."

We always tease one another; but we are great friends. We expect that we shall be engaged when we are old enough, but he is only seventeen now. I am fifteen.

"Who was second?" I asked.

"Knight. At least he would have been. I daresay he'd have been first if he hadn't given me a lot of tips what questions to look up. I—I've got something in my eye."

I did not offer to get it out, because Knight had died a month before, a fortnight after the examination.

"How many marks did you win by?" I asked, when Dick's eye was all right again.

"Two fifty-nine."

"Two hundred and fifty-nine! How splendid!"

"It shows it was all luck. The papers couldn't have suited me better if I'd seen them beforehand."

"You're a lucky boy, Dick," I told him sarcastically. "That's why you're top of the school, and captain of all the games, and win all the prizes at the sports."

"Oh, shut up, kiddie!" he growled. "I don't do anything half so clever as you do."

He tries to make out that it is clever of me to keep house for father and the boys, but it is quite easy now father's tales sell so well. He is Frank Marchant, the great author, and editors are beginning to find out how good his stories are.

"I'm not a bit clever, Dick," I said. "You know I'm not; but I am ever so glad that you are. I am pleased."

Father was nearly as pleased as I was, and so was Dick's grandmother. He lives with her because his father and mother are in India. The boys at the school were pleased, too, and they came and cheered outside his house in the evening, but somehow Dick didn't seem so happy as you would have expected.

"You see, kiddie," he said, "it's rough on other chaps. Poor old Knight was awfully set on it. I suppose I'm a bit out of sorts. I don't feel like talking. Play something, will you?"

So I played and sang some of the songs that he likes, and when he left in the evening he was quite bright again.

"I'll come round to-morrow afternoon and grin like a Cheshire cat," he promised.

He did not come the next afternoon, and just after tea his grandmother sent and asked me to go round there. "Dick's in dreadful trouble, Molly," she told me. "It's about the scholarship; but you'd better get him to tell you himself. Molly"—she took my hands in hers—"don't let him ruin his life for any foolish ideas of schoolboy honour. He'll listen to *you*—my George's boy!"

I felt so bad that I couldn't speak. So I just kissed her, and went into the study to Dick. He was sitting with one elbow on the desk, and his head on his hand. His mouth was shut as if he were biting something, and his forehead was wrinkled, and his face had a grey look.

"Dick!" I said. "Dick, dear?"

He did not answer, so I went and put my arm round him. You do not think about being "proper," when anyone you are very fond of is hurt or worried.

"If I were in trouble," I whispered, "I would tell *you*, Dick."

He nodded and squeezed my hand. Then he fetched a chair and made me sit just opposite him, and looked at me as if he did not know how to speak. I could not speak either, only stare. Everything in

the room seemed twice as distinct as usual, as if I had never properly noticed it before, and I remembered that father said something in one of his tales about "sorrow's spectacles."

"It's the scholarship, Molly," Dick said at last. "The Head had a letter from some printing people this morning. They do the examination papers, and they've found out that one of their clerks let a fellow at the school have an advance copy. The clerk's bolted, and they don't know who it was. Of course, if a fellow saw the questions beforehand he was bound to answer them well."

"But you beat him," I said. "So what does it matter? It makes it all the more wonderful that you should win by so many marks."

"So wonderful that they think I was the fellow who had the papers."

"You!" I cried. "You! They think you would do a thing like that! It's—it's—*absurd!*"

It seemed so absurd that I began laughing. It was a funny kind of laugh, and I cried, too, and when I began I couldn't stop for a long time. It was hysterics, Dick said, and he got me some water, and made me sit in the arm-chair, and I said they were all hateful at the school, and I was sure it was a plot that they had got up to ruin Dick, because they were jealous of him. I should have said a lot more, but Dick put his hand over my mouth.

"It isn't anything of the sort," he contradicted. "They wouldn't do anything mean, and they wouldn't suspect anyone else if they could help it. The Head nearly cried when he spoke to me about it, and old Sammy"—he meant Mr. Samson, the mathematical master—"took my arm and said—Oh, I can't talk about it! They suspect me because they're bound to. I answered every question, and no one else did, and I got 170 marks more than anyone has ever got before, and—"

"I don't care if you made a million marks," I told him. "They ought to believe you when you gave them your word that you didn't do it, and didn't know anything about it. Dick, why do you look at me like that?"

"I couldn't give them my word that I didn't know anything about it, Molly."

"What!" I cried. "You knew! Dick, you're shielding someone else. Who was it? What did he do? How did you know?"

He drew a deep breath:

"I can't tell you anything about it, Molly," he said, "only that I couldn't take the scholarship if they would let me."

"But why not? You did not benefit by it."

He made a funny sound in his throat:

"I did," he said:

I suppose I must have fainted, for I don't remember any more till I found myself on the sofa. There was a nasty smell of burnt feathers, and Dick's grandmother was leaning over me with a bottle of smelling-salts. As soon as I could speak I asked for Dick, but when they went for him he had gone. He had taken his bag and some of his clothes. I think I should have fainted again, but his grandmother fainted this time, so I had to look after her. When she came to she didn't seem quite sensible, and kept wringing her hands and saying: "George's boy! My George's boy!" And we couldn't get her to take any notice of us:

We put her to bed, and the upper-housemaid came home with me because I was still rather faint. She cried all the way. They were all fond of Dick. I couldn't cry at all, but when she begged me not to be hard on him I kissed her. I did not mean to be hard on him, of course, but I was too hurt to talk, and I felt as if I should scream when I thought how *he* must feel.

Father was not home when I got in. So I sent Jane to bed, and sat up for him: I wanted to ask him to go and find Dick, and tell him that I was still his friend, and always would be. But when he came in I did not seem as if I could speak. He came and sat by me and stroked my hair while I told him:

I expected that he would make a fuss of me, and comfort me, but he pushed his chair back, and looked angrier than I had ever seen him.

"Father!" I begged. "Don't be cross with Dick. He didn't mean it. Father!" I caught at his sleeve, but he pulled it away and got up and walked about the room: At last he came and sat on the sofa beside me and took my hands in his.

"I am not cross with *Dick*, Molly," he said. "I—no, I can't be cross with you: There are two people whom I've been very proud of—my brave, unselfish little daughter and her manly boy lover. Molly, you know *Dick*?"

I sat up quickly and caught at father's arm.

"Oh!" I cried. "You mean—he *didn't* do it? What a *wicked*, *hateful* girl I was to think so. Of course he didn't do it!"

"No," said father, "of course not! Dick couldn't do a mean or shabby thing to save his life. If he profited by it—and he did, if he says so—he profited unknowingly. He did not even know yesterday. I will swear to that."

"You will find him," I begged. "He will tell *you*, and you will put it right at the school?"

"I've no doubt I shall find him," father said. "I don't know that he'll tell me, and if he does I fear I shall not be able to tell them at the school. Dick's code of honour is a very sound one. If he holds that he can't honourably tell, he probably can't. I don't think I'd better find him just yet, Molly. If he told me, *my* mouth might be sealed. I must find out for myself. Let me think——" He thought with his eyes shut, like he does when he's plotting out a tale, and presently he nodded. "Yes," he said. "Yes, yes!"

"Tell me," I begged, but he shook his head.

"Not to-night, dear; not to-night. Now you must go to bed."

"I can't," I said. "Perhaps Dick is out in the cold."

"Not he," father said, "Dick isn't the sort to do anything foolish. He had the sense to take his clothes. He's left the town and gone somewhere—and he's safely in bed and asleep."

"Asleep!" I cried. "Oh, father! He's lying awake and thinking that I doubt him."

"Well," said father slowly, "you did."

That is the only harsh thing that father ever said to me. It hurt dreadfully, but I was glad that he said it, because I deserved to be hurt, and I wished he would say something to hurt me more.

I went up to my room, but I did not go to bed, only dozed a little, with a rug round me. When it was light I put on my hat and jacket and went out to find Dick. He had often told me that, if he had not been going into his uncle's business he would have liked to be an electrician, and he was always talking of some electric works at Deltridge. So I felt sure he would go there. It is only twenty miles away, and the first train starts at 6.5. So I went by that.

I got there at seven. A policeman told me the way to the works, and I waited outside, and presently I saw Dick coming. He was looking down at the ground, and he didn't see me till I had hold of his arm.

"Dick!" I said. "Oh, my dear, *dear*

Dick! I know you didn't do it; and I'd have come just the same if you had; and—you used to like me, Dick!"

He didn't say anything, only squeezed my arm in his, and walked on till we came to a quiet alley. Then he kissed me.

"Don't!" I cried. "Don't!—I don't mean that I don't like you to, because I *do*. No, no! Not till I've told you. I *did* think you'd done it, Dick, till father came home. *He* knew you hadn't, directly. I was the most disloyal, horrible, hateful girl in the world; but—— You don't want to kiss me now, do you? Oh, Dick! Someone will see!"

"I don't care," he said.

I don't think I cared either, because I was so glad that he had forgiven me: Indeed, he tried to make out that there was nothing to forgive, and that I ought really to suspect him still. I couldn't help laughing at that, though I was rather cold, and a little faint and terribly hungry. He hadn't eaten any breakfast himself, so we went to a cookshop and had some together, and he explained why he had thought it best to go away.

"Of course," he said, "if I had done it, I should have had to stay and stand the racket. If I'd thought they'd prosecute me, or anything of that sort, even, I think I should have stopped to see it out; but they wouldn't. They're bound to try to hush it up for the sake of the school—the good old school! I thought it would be easier for them to keep it quiet if I was out of the way, and I thought it would be easier for you, too. I knew you'd stick to me; but it didn't seem right to let you."

"Oh, Dick!" I cried. "*Don't* say that: I *can't* give you up. Would you like me to be so mean as to desert you when you're in trouble?"

"That's just it," he said doubtfully. "Most people would say I ought not to let you keep friends with me, because it will be beastly for you. But if a thing that's beastly to do is the straight thing——"

"Dick," I said, "it *isn't* a beastly thing—sticking to you. It's *nice*! And it's *right*, Dick."

"Yes," he agreed, "I think so. You wouldn't be what you are if you didn't. I'll make it as nice for you as I can, Molly. I'm going to get on somehow. I shall take a fresh name, and you shan't be ashamed of it, if—I suppose some day it will be yours, kiddie?"

"Of course," I said. "Only—Dick, I don't see how you can stop away from home." He shook his head. "It will kill your grandmother if you do. She fainted last night, and we couldn't make her understand things; and she kept calling for you. I know how horrid it is to go back there, Dick, but you'll go, I think, won't you?"

Dick whistled a little to himself. Then he called the waiter, and paid the bill, and we went to the railway station. He had just time to send telegrams to father and to his grandmother before the train left.

He laughed and talked all the way, and pretended that he didn't mind facing the people in the town, but I knew that he did, because he kept saying that there were never many people about at that time in the morning, and the boys would all be at school. When we were going into the station he put his head out of the carriage window, and jumped back as if he had been shot.

"The platform's crowded, Molly," he said, and gave a sort of groan. "Look here, I'll jump out sharp, and walk off. They'll stare at me, and follow me. You can wait till I've drawn them off. You mustn't be seen with me just now."

I took hold of his arm and laughed.

"I'm going to take your arm like this," I said, "and walk all the way with you, and I'm going to be seen with you every day; and you needn't be afraid that I shall hang my head, or look ashamed of you, because I shan't."

"You're a—little angel, kiddie," he said. There was a dreadful choke in his voice. "But I can't let you."

"Then I shall run after you, and hold on to you," I told him, "and that will make me look ever so much sillier. I'll mind what you say in everything else, Dick, but in this I won't."

Dick was going to say something, but just then we ran alongside the platform. It was crammed full of the boys from the school, and they gave a tremendous yell. I thought they were going to mob Dick. He thought so, too, and he pushed me back and stood at the window. His eyes seemed to blaze, and he clenched his fists. I tried to push myself in front of him, but I might as well have tried to move a brick wall. He was going to jump out, but when they saw him they flung their caps up in the air and cheered. And the Headmaster caught hold of the door before the train stopped, and ran along with it. He was almost crying.

"My boy!" he said. "My dear boy!"

Then they opened the door, and he caught hold of one of Dick's hands, and Mr. Sampson caught hold of the other; and the boys caught hold of his coat and slapped him on the back, and shouted: "Carson! Good old Carson!" Then some of them hoisted him up on their shoulders and cheered as if they would never stop.

I was cheering, too, and waving my handkerchief, and suddenly four big boys brought a chair, and put me on it, and lifted me up; and Mr. Sampson jumped up on one of the seats and called out: "Three cheers for Carson's sweetheart!" And then they cheered me.

I never felt so foolish in all my life. At first I put my face in my hands, but I thought they would think I was ashamed of being his sweetheart, if I did that. So I put my hat straight and smiled at him, and he kissed his hand to me. I think that was the right thing to do, because it showed that he was not ashamed of me.

I was so confused that I did not notice that father was there, till the Head got up to speak with one hand on his shoulder.

"Boys," he said. "We have unintentionally done a great wrong to our dear friend, Carson. If the affection that we all feel for him, if the admiration that we all feel for him, can right this wrong, it is righted. If these things can make up to his friends—including the dear little friend you have just cheered—for the hurt which they have suffered, that is remedied too."

"I have told you all in school that we have learnt beyond doubt that it was poor Knight who obtained the examination papers. He was beginning, unknown to us, to suffer from the malady which killed him. I think we may reasonably assume that his sufferings affected his mind, and led him to do what, in his sane senses, he would never have done. He was, as we knew him, an honourable, upright fellow: Let us continue to think of him as such."

"That he still retained his feeling of honour is shown by the fact of his advising Carson, who, he well knew, was practically certain to win the scholarship—to look up some of the questions which he had ascertained would be set. Carson had, of course, no suspicion of the real facts. So he acted upon Knight's advice, with what good result the examination showed. Knowing all your work, I have, however, no hesitation in saying that he must, anyhow, have been

first, though perhaps not by so many marks.

"When he heard about the papers, he realised at once what had happened. He was loyal to his dead friend, who, at least, had tried to be loyal to him. I am very proud of you, Carson, and I readily assent to your request for a fresh examination:

"There is one thing more that I should like to say. When we were all foolish enough to doubt Carson, Mr. Marchant, with his large heart, felt, as we should have felt, that he could not possibly have done this thing. With his clever mind he saw the only motive that could have made him act as he had acted. He came to me this morning, and we went to the house of poor Knight's parents and found out the rest. Boys, I call upon you for three cheers for Mr. Marchant!"

They cheered father for nearly five minutes. Then they called upon him for a speech; but he only just thanked them, and asked them to listen to Dick. I trembled all over when he got up, for fear he would be confused. But he spoke quite nicely, and only hesitated a very little. He is a very wonderful boy, I think.

"My dear masters, dear schoolfellows, and dear friends," he said. "It wasn't your fault, and I never thought so. I kept saying to myself all the time: 'I'm doing what the fellows at the old school would do, if they were in my place.' That helped me to do it. I was rather cut up—so was Molly. She helped me to bear it, and I'm glad you know how plucky she was. You've done the kindest thing you could do to me in cheering Mr. Marchant and her. I want to thank you all. Thank you, sir, thank you"—he nodded to the Head and to all the masters—"thank you, dear old chaps!"

"You're all so kind, there's one thing more I want you to do for me. Well, it won't be for me, because I think you'll want to do it for yourselves. What I thought—it was the way Mr. Marchant looked at me when the Head was speaking put it into my mind—Mr. Marchant always makes you think of things. I think we ought to ask the Head to take a message from us to—to poor old Knight's people; that we all know he didn't understand when he did it; and we all know what a good, honest chap he was; and—and we'll never think of him any other way."

Dick's voice sounded as if he were going to break down. I don't know if he did, because I broke down myself. I think everybody did. I'm sure the Headmaster did, because Mr. Sampson had to speak for him, and his voice sounded husky.

"All in favour of the message hold up their hands," he said. I held up both mine, and so did everybody, and Mr. Sampson said it was carried unanimously. Then father and Dick found me, and we got in a carriage and went to Dick's grandmother's. The boys ran after us cheering, and when the old lady came to the door they cheered her.

They are very nice boys. When the time for the scholarship examination came not a single one entered against Dick. They said it was because they knew he would beat them, but we knew that wasn't the reason: "It's because they're such jolly good fellows," Dick said, "and if I'm decent at all, it's because I've learnt it from the chaps at the school—and from you!"

But they know better than that, and so do I. If ever I want to do something that I shouldn't, I say to myself: "You can't do that, Molly, because you're Dick's sweetheart!"

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

BY STUART WISHING:

*When I was engaged to Phyllis,
Ah! halcyon days were mine!
I reckoned the English language
Too poor for her charms divine:
I spoke of "My Lady Peerless"—
"Of Cupid's ball, the belle"—
But the name that I called her chiefly
Was: "My dear little demoiselle."*

*We married; and ever after
Life moved to a joyous tune:
Our idyll remained unaltered—
Undimmed was the honeymoon:
But—the money that's spent by Phyllis!
Oh, sad is the tale to tell:
So the name that I call her still is
"My dear little demoiselle!"*

Romances of the Road. ❖ ❖

The popular feature "Romances of the Road" gives place next month to a new series which I am sure will appeal to all my readers. It is entitled:

"THRILLING ESCAPES."

Hairbreadth escapes from prison, flood, fire, Indians, wolves, sharks, and pursuers of all kinds, never fail to interest if well described. The escapes to be published in this new feature will be selected from the works of the best fiction-writers of the world. Next month will appear two very exciting extracts: "The Escape from the Château d'If," from Alexandre Dumas' famous book, "The Count of Monte Cristo," and "The Escape from the Indians," from "The Last of the Mohicans," by J. Fenimore Cooper.

DICK TURPIN'S RIDE TO YORK. ❖ ❖ ❖

❖ ❖ From "Rookwood," by W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.

(Published by Greening & Co. Ltd.)

Harrison Ainsworth's popular novel, "Rookwood," relates the adventures of Dick Turpin, the notorious highwayman, who is one of its chief characters. Turpin and his friend, Tom King, another famous highwayman, are surprised at the Falstaff Inn, and surrounded by their pursuers, consisting of Chief Constable Paterson, Cecil Coates the Attorney, and Titus Tyrconnel, an Irish adventurer. Turpin, in attempting to rescue King, shoots him through the heart, and he falls dead. Turpin, who is mounted on Black Bess, gets away, and, setting off in the direction of Hampstead, makes the daring resolution to ride to York. This feat he accomplishes, but at the expense of his noble steed, who dies within the sound of York bells. Turpin was hanged at York in the year 1739.

AWAY they fly, past scattered cottages, swiftly and skimmingly, like eagles on the wing, along the Enfield highway. All were well mounted, and the horses, now thoroughly warmed, had got into their paces, and did their work beautifully. None of Coates' party had lost ground, but they maintained it at the expense of their steeds, which were streaming like water-carts, while Black Bess had scarcely turned a hair.

It was not Dick's object to ride away from his pursuers; he could have done that at any moment; he liked the fun of the chase, and would have been sorry to put a period to his own excitement. Confident in his mare, he just kept her at such a speed as should put his pursuers completely to it, without, in the slightest degree, inconveniencing himself. The reader may judge of the speed at which they went, when we inform him that little better than an hour had elapsed, and nearly twenty miles had been ridden over.

"By the mother that bore me," said Titus, as they went along in this slapping style . . . "if the fellow isn't lighting his pipe! I saw the sparks fly on each side of him—and there he goes like a smoky chimney on a frosty morning! See, he turns his impudent phiz with the pipe in his mouth! Are we to stand that, Mr. Coates?"

"Wait awhile, sir—wait awhile," said Coates, "we'll smoke him by-and-by."

It was now grey twilight. The mists of coming night were weaving a thin curtain over the rich surrounding landscape. All the sounds and hum of that delicious hour were heard, broken only by the regular clatter of the horses' hoofs. Tired of shouting, the chasers now kept on their way in deep silence; each man held his breath and plunged his spurs rowl-deep into his horse, but the animals were already at the top of their speed, and incapable of greater exertion. Paterson, who was a hard rider, and perhaps a thought better

mounted, kept the lead; the rest followed as they might. : : :

The merry chime of waggon bells rang pleasantly from afar. : : : The waggoner pricked up his ears, and fancied he heard the distant rumbling of an earthquake.

On rush the pack, whipping, spurring, tugging for very life. Again they gave voice in hope the waggoner might succeed in stopping the fugitive; but Dick was already by his side.

"Harkee, my tulip," cried he, taking the pipe from his mouth as he passed, "tell my friends behind they will hear of me at York." : : :

Turpin was now out of sight, and although our trio flogged with might and main, they could never catch a glimpse of him until, within a short distance of Ware, they beheld him at the door of a little public-house, standing with his bridle in his hand, coolly quaffing a tankard of ale. No sooner, however, were they in sight, than Dick vaulted into the saddle, and rode off.

"Devil seize you, sir! Why didn't you stop him?" exclaimed Paterson, as he rode up, "my horse is dead lame. I cannot go any further. Do you know what a prize you have missed? Do you know who that was?"

"No, sir, I don't," said the publican, "but I know he gave the mare more ale than he took himself, and he has given me a guinea instead of a shilling. He's a regular good 'un."

"A good 'un," said Paterson: "It was Turpin, the famous highwayman: We are in pursuit of him. Have you any horses? Our cattle are all blown."

"You'll find the post-house in the town, gentlemen. I'm sorry I can't accommodate you, but I keeps no stabling. I wish you a very good evening, sir." : : :

Accordingly to the post-house they went; and with as little delay as circumstances admitted, fresh hacks being procured, accompanied by a postillion, the party again pursued their onward course, encouraged to believe they were still on the right scent.

Night had now spread her mantle over the earth; still it was not wholly dark. A few stars were twinkling in the deep, cloudless heavens, and a pearly radiance in the eastern horizon heralded the rising of the orb of night. : : :

Full of ardour and excitement, determined to execute what he had mentally undertaken, did Turpin hold on his solitary course.

Everything was favourable to his project; the roads were in admirable condition, his mare was in like order. : : :

"She has now got her wind in her," said Dick, "I'll see what she can do—hark away, lass—hark away! I wish they could see her now," as he felt her almost fly away with him.

Encouraged by her master's voice and hand, Black Bess started forward at a pace which few horses could have equaled, and scarcely any have sustained so long. Even Dick, accustomed as he was to her magnificent action, felt electrified at the speed with which he was borne along. : . .

"Well," mused Turpin, "I'll give them something to talk about. This ride of mine shall ring in their ears long after I'm done for—put to bed with a mattock, and tucked up with a spade :

And when I am gone, boys, each huntsman shall say,
None rode like Dick Turpin so far in a day.

"And thou, too, Brave Bess! Thy name shall be linked with mine, and we'll go down to posterity together; and what," added he despondingly, "if it should be too much for thee? What if—but no matter. Better die now while I am with thee than fall into the knacker's hands. Better die with all thy honours upon thy head than drag out thy old age at the sand-cart. Hark forward, lass—hark forward!"

Black Bess rallied instantly, and seized apparently with a kindred enthusiasm, snorted joyously as she recovered her speed. . . .

Hall, cot, tree, tower, glade, mead, waste, or woodland are seen, passed, left behind, and vanish as in a dream. Motion is scarce perceptible—it is impetus—volition. The horse and her rider are driven forward, as it were, by self-accelerated speed. A hamlet is visible in the moonlight. It is scarce discovered ere the flints sparkle beneath the mare's hoofs. A moment's clatter upon the stones, and it is left behind. : . .

The limits of two shires are already past: They are within the confines of a third: They have entered the merry county of Huntingdon—they have surmounted the gentle hill that slips into Godmanchester: They are by the banks of the rapid Ouse—the bridge is past, and as Turpin rode through the deserted streets of Huntingdon, he heard the eleventh hour given from the iron tongue of St. Mary's spire. In four hours (it was about seven when he had started) Dick had accomplished full sixty miles! ■ ■ ■

The night had hitherto been balmy and beautiful, with a bright array of stars, and a golden harvest moon, which seemed to diffuse even warmth with its radiance; but now Turpin was approaching the region of fog and fen, and he began to feel the influence of that dark atmosphere: The intersecting dykes, yawners, gullies, or whatever they are called, began to send forth their steaming vapours, and chilled the soft and wholesome air, obscuring the void, and, in some instances, as it were, choking up the road itself with vapour: But fog or fen was the same to Bess, her hoofs rattled merrily along the road. : : :

It was upon this occasion that, traveling through a fog of this kind, the moment they emerged from its dense canopy, they burst upon the York stage. It was not an uncommon thing for the coach to be stopped, and so furious was the career of our highwayman, that the man involuntarily drew up his horses.

Turpin had also to draw in his rein, a task of no little difficulty, as charging a huge, lumbering coach with its full complement of passengers, was more than even Bess could accomplish. The moon shone bright on Turpin and his mare. He was unmasked and his features distinctly visible. An exclamation was uttered by a gentleman on the box, who it appeared instantly recognised him.

"Pull up—draw your horses across the road!" cried the gentleman: "That's Dick Turpin, the highwayman. His capture would be worth three hundred pounds to you," added he, addressing the coachman, "and is of equal importance to me. Stand!" shouted he, presenting a cocked pistol.

This resolution of the gentleman was not apparently agreeable, either to the coachman or the majority of the passengers—the name of Turpin acting like magic upon them: One man jumped off behind, and was with difficulty afterwards recovered, having tumbled into a deep ditch at the roadside:

An old gentleman with a cotton nightcap, who had popped out his head to swear at the coachman, drew it suddenly in: A faint scream in a female key issued from within, and there was a considerable hubbub on the roof:

The gentleman on the box now discharged his pistol, and the confusion within was redoubled.

The white nightcap was popped out like a rabbit's head, and as quickly popped back, on hearing the highwayman's voice: Owing

to the plunging of the horses, the gentleman had missed his aim:

Prepared for such emergencies as the present, and seldom at any time taken aback, Dick received the fire without flinching.

He then lashed the horses out of his course, and rode up, pistol in hand, to the gentleman who had fired:

"Major Mowbray," said he, in a stern tone. "I know you. I meant not either to assault you or these gentlemen—yet you have attempted my life, sir, a second time: But you are now in my power, and, by Heaven! if you do not answer the questions I put to you, nothing earthly shall save you."

"If you ask aught I may not answer, fire!" said the Major; "I will never ask life from such as you."¹

"Have you seen aught of Sir Luke Rookwood?" asked Dick:

"The villain you mean is not yet secured,"² replied the Major, "but we have traces of him. 'Tis with a view of procuring more efficient assistance that I ride to town."

"They have not met then, since?" said Dick carelessly:

"Met! Whom do you mean?"

"Your sister and Sir Luke?" said Dick:

"My sister meet him!" cried the Major angrily: "Think you he dare show himself at Rookwood?"

"Ho—ho!" laughed Dick, "she is at Rookwood, then? A thousand thanks, Major: Good night to you, gentlemen." : :

And off he went like the breath of the whirlwind: : : :

We will now make inquiries after Mr. Coates and his party, of whom we and Dick Turpin have for some time lost sight. With unabated ardour did the vindictive man of law and his myrmidons press forward: . . .

At each post-house they passed they obtained fresh horses, and while these were saddling, a post-boy was dispatched *en courier* to order relays at the next station: In this manner they proceeded after the first stopping without interruption: : : :

The coach which Dick had encountered hove in sight: There was another stoppage and another hubbub: The old gentleman's

1. Turpin had committed highway robbery on the Major and a reward was offered for his capture.

2. Sir Luke Rookwood, whom Dick championed, was thought by the Major to be an impostor. He was attempting to win the hand of the Major's sister.

nightcap was again manifested, and suffered a sudden occultation as upon the former occasion. The post-boy, who was in advance, had halted, and given up his horse to Major Mowbray, who exchanged his seat on the box for one on the saddle, deeming it more expedient, after his interview with Turpin, to return to Rookwood rather than to proceed to town. The post-boy was placed behind Coates, as being the lightest weight, and, thus reinforced, the party pushed forward as rapidly as heretofore.

Eighty and odd miles had now been traversed, the boundary of another county—Northampton—passed; yet no rest nor respite had Dick Turpin or his unflinching mare enjoyed. But here he deemed it fitting to make a brief halt.

Bordering the beautiful domains of Burleigh House stood a little retired hostelry of some antiquity, which bore the great Lord Treasurer's arms. With this house Dick was not altogether unacquainted. The lad who acted as hostler was known to him. . . .

"Glad to see you, Captain Turpin," said he, "can I do anything for you?"

"Get me a couple of bottles of brandy and a beefsteak," said Dick.

"As to the brandy, you can have that in a jiffy—but the steak, Lord love ye, the old ooman won't stand it at this time; but there's a cold round, mayhap a slice of that might do—or a knuckle of ham?"

"Curse your knuckles, Ralph," cried Dick; "have you any raw meat in the house?"

"Raw meat!" echoed Ralph, in surprise, "oh, yes, there's a rare rump of beef—you can have a cut of that if you like."

"That's the thing I want," said Dick; ungirthing his mare, "give me the scraper there. . . . Now run and get the brandy—better bring three bottles—uncork 'em, and let me have half a pail of water to mix with the spirit."

"A pailful of brandy and water to wash down a raw steak—my eyes!" exclaimed Ralph, opening wide his sleepy peepers, adding, as he went about the execution of his task: "I always thought them Rump-adders, as they call themselves, rum fellows, but now I'm sartin sure on it."

The most sedulous groom could not have bestowed more attention upon the horse of his heart than Dick Turpin now paid to his mare. He scraped, chafed, and dried her, sounded each muscle, traced each sinew, pulled her ears, examined the state of her

feet, and ascertaining that "her withers were unwrung," finally washed her from head to foot in the diluted spirit; not, however, before he had conveyed a thimbleful of the liquid to his own parched throat, and replenished what Falstaff calls a "pocket-pistol," which he had about him.

While Ralph was engaged in rubbing her down after her bath, Dick occupied himself, not in dressing the raw steak in the manner the stable-boy had anticipated, but in rolling it round the bit of his bridle.

"She will now go as long as there's breath in her body," said he, putting the flesh-covered iron within her mouth.

The saddle being once more replaced, after champing a moment or two at the bit, Bess began to snort and paw the earth, as if impatient of the delay. . . .

Suddenly she pricked up her ears, and uttered a low neigh. A dull tramp was audible.

"Ha!" exclaimed Dick, "they come!"

"Who come, Captain?" asked Ralph.

"The road takes a turn here—don't it?" asked Dick, "sweeps round to the right by the plantations in the hollow?"

"Ay, ay, Captain," answered Ralph, "it's plain you know the ground."

"What lies behind yon shed?"

"A stiff fence, Captain—a reg'lar rasper; beyond that a hillside steep as a house—no 'oss as was ever shoed can go down it."

"Indeed!" laughed Dick.

A loud halloo from Major Mowbray, who seemed advancing upon the wings of the wind, told Dick that he was discovered. . . .

Dick saw in an instant that if he now started he should come into collision with the Major exactly at the angle of the road, and he was by no means desirous of hazarding such a rencontre. He looked wistfully back at the double fence.

"Come into the stable. Quick, Captain—quick!" exclaimed Ralph. . . .

Dick, lowering his head, rode into the tenement, the door of which was most unceremoniously slapped in the Major's face, and bolted on the other side.

"Villain!" cried Major Mowbray, thundering on the door, "come forth. You are now fairly trapped at last—caught like the woodcock in your own springe. We have you. Open the door, I say, and save us the trouble of forcing it. You cannot escape us. We will burn the building down, but we will have you!"

"What do you want, measter?" cried

Ralph, from the lintel, whence he had reconnoitred the Major, and kept the door fast. "You're clean mistaken—there be no one here."

"We'll soon see that," said Paterson, who had now arrived.

And, leaping from his horse, the chief constable took a short run to give himself impetus, and with his foot burst open the door.

This being accomplished, in dashed the Major and Paterson, but the stable was vacant.

A door opened at the back. They rushed to it. The sharply-sloping sides of a hill slipped abruptly downwards within a yard of the door. It was a perilous descent to the horseman, yet the print of a horse's heels was visible in the dislodged turf and scattered soil.

"Confusion!" cried the Major, "he has escaped us." : : :

Dick Turpin meanwhile held bravely on his course. Bess was neither strained by her gliding passage down the slippery hill-side, nor shaken by "larking" the fence in the meadow. : : :

On regaining the high road she resumed her old pace, and once more they were distancing Time's swift chariot in its whirling passage o'er the earth. Stamford and the tongue of Lincoln's fenny shire, upon which it is situated, are passed, almost in a breath. Rutland is won and past, and Lincolnshire once more entered.

The road now verged within a bowshot of Melton Mowbray. : : :

Bess here let out in a style with which it would have puzzled the best Leicestershire squire's best pad to have kept pace. The spirit which she imbibed through the pores of her skin, and the juices of the meat she had champed, seemed to have communicated preternatural excitement to her. Her pace was absolutely terrific. : : :

Hurrah! Hurrah! That wild halloo—that waving arm—enlivening shout! What means it? He is once more upon Yorkshire ground—his horse's hoofs beat once more the soil of that noble shire. So transported was Dick that he could almost have flung himself from the saddle to kiss the dust beneath his feet. Thrice fifty miles has he run, nor has the morn yet dawned upon his labours.

Hurrah! The end draws nigh! The goal is in view! Halloo—halloo—on! : : :

Bess now began to manifest some slight symptoms of distress. There was a strain

in the carriage of her throat—a dulness in her eye—a laxity in her ear—and a slight stagger in her gait, which Turpin noted with apprehension.

Still she went on, though not at the same gallant pace as heretofore. : : :

The sun had just o'ertopped the "high eastern hill" as Turpin reached the Ferry of Cawood, and his beams were reflected upon the deep and sluggish waters of the Ouse.

Wearily had he dragged his course thither—wearily and slow. The powers of his gallant steed were spent, and he could scarcely keep her from sinking—yet still it was now midway 'twixt the hours of five and six—nine miles only lay before him—and that thought again revived him.

He reached the water's edge—he hailed the ferry-boat which was then on the other side of the river. At that instant a loud shout smote his ear—it was the halloo of his pursuers. Despair was in his look. He cried to the boatman and bade him pull fast. The man obeyed, but he had to breast a strong stream, and had a lazy barque and heavy sculls to contend with. He had scarcely left the shore when another shout was raised from his pursuers—the tramp of their steeds grew louder and louder.

The boat had scarcely reached the middle of the stream. He hesitated an instant, and stemmed the tide. : : :

Refreshed by her bath, Bess scrambled up the sides of the stream, and speedily regained the road.

"I shall do it yet," shouted Dick, "that stream has saved her. Hark away, lass! Hark away!"

Bess heard the cheering cry, and she answered to the call. She roused all her energies and strained every sinew, put forth all her remaining strength. Once more on wings of swiftness she bore him away from his pursuers, and Major Mowbray, who had now scrambled on the shore, and made certain of securing him, beheld him spring like a wounded hare from beneath his very hand.

"It cannot hold out," said the Major: "It is but an expiring flash—that gallant steed must soon drop."

"She be regularly booked, that's certain," said the post-boy: "We shall find her on the road."

Contrary to all expectations, however, Bess held on, and set pursuit at defiance: Her pace was swift as when she started—but it was unconscious and mechanical

action. : : : Her eye was glazing—her chest heaving—her flank quivered—her chest again fallen. Yet she held on.

"She is dying, by Heaven!" said Dick. "I feel it——" No—she held on.

Fulford is past. The towers and pinnacles of York burst upon him. : : :

"It is done—it is won," cried Dick. "Hurrah—hurrah!" And the sunny air was cleft with his shouts.

Bess was not insensible to her master's exultation. She neighed feebly in answer to his call, and reeled forwards.

It was a piteous sight to see her—to mark her staring, protruding eyeball, her shaking flanks; but while life and limb held together holds she on.

Another mile is past: York is near.

"Hurrah!" shouted Dick; but his voice was hushed:

Bess tottered—fell. There was a dreadful gasp—a parting moan—a snort. Her eye gazed for an instant upon her master with a dying glare, then grew glassy, rayless, fixed: A shiver ran through her frame; her heart had burst.

Dick's eyes were blinded as with rain: His triumph, though achieved, was forgotten, his present safety unthought of. He stood weeping like one beside himself.

"And thou art gone, Bess?" cried he, in a voice of agony, lifting up his courser's head, and kissing her lips covered with blood-flecked foam. "Gone—gone! And I have killed the best steed that was ever crossed; and for what?" added Dick, beating his brow with his clenched hand—"for what? For what?"

At that moment the deep bell of the Minster clock tolled out the hour of six.

JEANIE DEANS' WALK FROM * * * * * * * * * * EDINBURGH TO LONDON.

From "*The Heart of Midlothian*," by SIR WALTER SCOTT.

(Published by A. & C. Black.)

The following extracts from Scott's famous novel, "*The Heart of Midlothian*," describe part of its heroine's journey from Edinburgh to London, which is undertaken by her in order to plead for the life of her sister, Effie Deans, who is lying under unjust sentence of execution for child murder. Nobly helped by her countryman, the Duke of Argyle, poor Jeanie at length succeeds in gaining admittance to the presence of Queen Caroline, and in speaking with Her Majesty face to face, with the result that Effie Deans is reprieved, and her sentence commuted to one of banishment for fourteen years:

When Jeanie is received by the Queen, Her Majesty asks her how she traveled up from Scotland. "Upon my foot, mostly, madam," is her reply. "What, all that immense way upon foot? How far did you walk in a day?" "Five-and-twenty miles, and a bittock." "I thought I was a good walker," says the Queen, "but this shames me sadly."

IN the present day a journey from Edinburgh to London is a matter at once safe, brief, and simple, however inexperienced or unprotected the traveler. Numerous coaches of different rates of charge, and as many packets, are perpetually passing and repassing betwixt the capital of Britain and her northern sister, so that the most timid or indolent may execute a journey upon a few hours' notice. But it was different in 1737.

So slight and infrequent was the intercourse betwixt London and Edinburgh, that men still alive remember that upon one occasion the mail from the former city arrived at the General Post Office in Scotland with only one letter in it.

The usual mode of traveling was by means

of post-horses, the traveler occupying one, and his guide another, in which manner, by relays of horses from stage to stage, the journey might be accomplished in a wonderfully short time by those who could endure fatigue. To have the bones shaken to pieces by a constant change of those hacks was a luxury for the rich—the poor were under the necessity of using the mode of conveyance with which Nature had provided them:

With a strong heart, and a frame patient of fatigue, Jeanie Deans, traveling at the rate of twenty miles a day, and sometimes further, traversed the southern part of Scotland, and advanced as far as Durham.

Hitherto she had been either among her own countryfolk, or those to whom her bare feet and tartan screen were objects too

familiar to attract much attention. But as she advanced she perceived that both circumstances exposed her to sarcasm and taunts which she might otherwise have escaped; and although in her heart she thought it unkind and inhospitable to sneer at a passing stranger on account of the fashion of her attire, yet she had the good sense to alter those parts of her dress which attracted ill-natured observation.

Her checked screen was deposited carefully in her bundle, and she conformed to the national extravagance of wearing shoes and stockings for the whole day. She confessed afterwards, that "besides the wastrife, it was lang or she could walk sae comfortably with the shoes as without them; but there was often a bit saft heather by the roadside, and that helped her weel on."

The want of the screen, which was drawn over the head like a veil, she supplied by a *bon-grace*, as she called it; a large straw bonnet like those worn by the English maidens when labouring in the fields. "But I thought unco shame o' mysel'," she said, "the first time I put on a married woman's *bon-grace*, and me a single maiden."

With these changes she had little, as she said, to make "her kenspeckle when she didna speak," but her accent and language drew down on her so many jests and gibes, couched in a worse *patois* by far than her own, that she soon found it was her interest to talk as little and as seldom as possible. She answered, therefore, civil salutations of chance passengers with a civil curtsey, and chose, with anxious circumspection, such places of repose as looked at once most decent and sequestered.

She found the common people of England, although inferior in courtesy to strangers, such as was then practised in her own more unfrequented country, yet, upon the whole, by no means deficient in the real duties of hospitality. She readily obtained food, and shelter, and protection, at a very moderate rate, which sometimes the generosity of mine host altogether declined with a blunt apology: "Thee hast a long way afore thee, lass; and I'se ne'er take penny out o' a single woman's purse; it's the best friend thou can have on the road."

It often happened, too, that mine hostess was struck with "the tidy, nice Scotch body," and procured her an escort, or a cast in a waggon, for some part of the way, or gave her a useful advice and recommendation respecting her resting-places.

At York our pilgrim stopped for the best part of a day, partly to recruit her strength—partly because she had the good luck to obtain a lodging in an inn kept by a country-woman—partly to indite two letters. . . .

A painful day's journey brought her to Ferrybridge . . . and an introduction from Mrs. Bickerton (the hostess of the inn at York), added to her own simple and quiet manners, so propitiated the landlady of the "Swan" in her favour, that the good dame procured her the convenient accommodation of a pillion and post-horse then returning to Tuxford, so that she accomplished, on the second day after leaving York, the longest journey she had yet made. . . .

At noon the hundred-armed Trent, and the blackened ruins of Newark Castle . . . lay before her. It may easily be supposed that Jeanie had no curiosity to make antiquarian researches, but, entering the town, went straight to the inn to which she had been directed at Ferrybridge. . . .

After waiting some time, in hopes that a pair of horses that had gone southward would return in time for her use, she at length . . . resolved to prosecute her journey in her usual manner.

"It was all plain road," she was assured, "except a high mountain called Gunnerby Hill, about three miles from Grantham, which was her stage for the night."

Jeanie resumed her solitary walk, and was somewhat alarmed when evening and twilight overtook her in the open ground which extends to the foot of Gunnerby Hill. . . . The extensive commons on the North Road, most of which are now inclosed and in general a relaxed state of police, exposed the traveler to a highway robbery in a degree which is now unknown, except in the immediate vicinity of the Metropolis.

Aware of this circumstance, Jeanie mended her pace when she heard the tramping of a horse behind, and instinctively drew to one side of the road, as if to allow as much room for the rider to pass as might be possible. When the animal came up she found that it was bearing two women. . . .

(The women passed on, and Jeanie was pursuing her way when two men accosted her. They demanded her money or her life, and then took her prisoner. Jeanie was rescued by a madwoman, Madge Wildfire, and the two continued their journey together.)

They were now close by the village, one of those beautiful scenes which are so often found in merry England, where the cottages, instead of being built in two direct lines on each side of a dusty high-road, stand in detached groups, interspersed not only with large oaks, and elms, but with fruit-trees, so many of which were at this time in flourish, that the grove seemed enameled with their crimson and white blossoms: In the centre of the hamlet stood the parish church, and its little Gothic tower, from which at present was heard the Sunday chime of bells.

"We will wait here until the folk are in the church—they ca' the kirk a church in England, Jeanie, be sure you mind that—for if I was gaun forward amang them, a' the gytes o' boys and lasses wad be crying at Madge Wildfire's tail, the little hell-rakers! And the beadle would be as hard upon us as if it was our fault. I like their skirling as ill as he does, I can tell him; but I'm sure I often wish there was a het peat down their throats when they set them up that gait."

Conscious of the disorderly appearance of her own dress : : : and of the grotesque habit and demeanour of her guide, and sensible how important it was to secure an attentive and patient audience to her strange story from someone who might have the means to protect her, Jeanie readily acquiesced in Madge's proposal to rest under the trees, by which they were still somewhat screened, until the commencement of service should give them an opportunity of entering the hamlet without attracting a crowd around them: : : :

She sat herself down, therefore, at the foot of an oak, and by the assistance of a placid fountain, which had been dammed up for the use of the villagers, and which served her as a natural mirror, she began—no uncommon thing with a Scottish maiden of her rank—to arrange her toilette in the open air, and bring her dress, soiled and disordered as it was, into such order as the place and circumstances admitted.

She soon perceived reason, however, to regret that she had set about this task, however decent and necessary, in the present time and society.

Madge Wildfire, who, among other indications of insanity, had a most overwhelming opinion of those charms to which, in fact, she owed her misery, and whose mind, like a raft upon a lake, was agitated and driven about at random by each fresh

impulse, no sooner beheld Jeanie begin to arrange her hair, place her bonnet in order, rub the dust from her shoes and clothes, adjust her neck-handkerchief and mittens, and so forth, than with imitative zeal she began to bedizen and trick herself out with shreds and remnants of beggarly finery, which she took out of a little bundle, and which, when disposed around her person, made her appearance ten times more fantastic and apish than it had been before:

Jeanie groaned in spirit, but dared not interfere in a matter so delicate. Across the man's cap or riding hat which she wore, Madge placed a broken and soiled white feather, intersected with one which had been shed from the train of a peacock.

To her dress, which was a kind of riding habit, she stitched, pinned, and otherwise secured a large furbelow of artificial flowers, all crushed, wrinkled and dirty, which had first bedecked a lady of quality, then descended to her Abigail, and dazzled the inmates of the servants' hail. A tawdry scarf of yellow silk, trimmed with tinsel and spangles, which had seen as hard service, and boasted as honourable a transmission, was next flung over one shoulder, and fell across her person in the manner of a shoulder-belt or baldrick.

Madge then stripped off the coarse, ordinary shoes, which she wore, and replaced them by a pair of dirty satin ones, spangled and embroidered to match the scarf, and furnished with very high heels. She had cut a willow switch in her morning's walk, almost as long as a boy's fishing-rod: This she set herself seriously to peel, and when it was transformed into such a wand as the Treasurer or High Steward bears on public occasions, she told Jeanie that she thought they now looked decent, as young women should do upon the Sunday morning, and that, as the bells had done ringing, she was willing to conduct her to the interpreter's house.

Jeanie sighed heavily to think it should be her lot on the Lord's Day, and during kirk-time, too, to parade the street of an inhabited village with so very grotesque a comrade; but necessity had no law, since without a positive quarrel with the madwoman, which, in the circumstances, would have been very unadvisable, she could see no means of shaking herself free of her society.

As for poor Madge, she was completely elated with personal vanity, and the most

perfect satisfaction concerning her own dazzling dress and superior appearance. They entered the hamlet without being observed, except by one old woman, who, being nearly "high-gravel blind," was only conscious that something very fine and glittering was passing by, and dropped as deep a reverence to Madge as she would have done to a countess.

This filled up the measure of Madge's self-approbation. She minced, she ambled, she smiled, she simpered, and waved Jeanie Deans forward with the condescension of a noble chaperon, who has undertaken the charge of a country miss on her first journey to the capital.

Jeanie followed in patience, and with her eyes fixed on the ground, that she might save herself the mortification of seeing her companion's absurdities; but she started when, ascending two or three steps, she found herself in the churchyard, and saw that Madge was making straight for the door of the church. As Jeanie had no mind to enter the congregation in such company, she walked aside from the pathway, and said in a decided tone:

"Madge, I will wait till the church comes out—you may go in by yourself if you have a mind."

As she spoke these words she was about to seat herself upon one of the grave-stones.

Madge was a little before Jeanie when she turned aside, but, suddenly changing her course, she followed her with long strides and, with every feature inflamed with passion, overtook and seized her by the arm.

"Do ye think, ye ungratefu' wretch, that I am going to let you sit down upon my father's grave? The deil settle ye down, if ye dinna rise and come into the Interpreter's house, that's the house of God, wi' me, but I'll rive every dud aff your back!"

She adapted the action to the phrase; for with one clutch she stripped Jeanie of her straw bonnet and a handful of her hair to boot, and threw it up into an old yew-tree, where it stuck fast.

Jeanie's first impulse was to scream, but conceiving she might receive deadly harm before she could obtain the assistance of anyone, notwithstanding the vicinity of the church, she thought it wiser to follow the madwoman into the congregation, where she might find some means of escape from her, or at least be secured against her violence.

But when she meekly intimated her consent to follow Madge, her guide's uncertain brain had caught another train of ideas. She held Jeanie fast with one hand, and with the other pointed to the inscription on the gravestone, and commanded her to read it. Jeanie obeyed, and read these words:

"THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF DONALD MURDOCKSON, OF THE KING'S XXVI., OR CAMERONIAN REGIMENT, A SINCERE CHRISTIAN, A BRAVE SOLDIER, AND A FAITHFUL SERVANT, BY HIS GRATEFUL AND SORROWING MASTER, ROBERT STAUNTON."

"It's very weel read, Jeanie; it's just the very words," said Madge, whose ire had now faded into deep melancholy, and with a step which, to Jeanie's great joy, was uncommonly quiet and mournful, she led her companion towards the door of the church.

It was one of those old-fashioned Gothic parish churches, which are frequent in England, the most cleanly, decent, and reverential places of worship that are, perhaps, anywhere to be found in the Christian world. Yet, notwithstanding the decent solemnity of its exterior, Jeanie was too faithful to the Presbyterian kirk to have entered a prelatie place of worship, and would, upon any other occasion, have thought that she beheld in the porch the venerable figure of her father waving her back from the entrance, and pronouncing in a solemn tone: "Cease, my child, to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

But in her present agitating and alarming situation, she looked for safety to this forbidden place of assembly, as the hunted animal will sometimes seek shelter from imminent danger in the human habitation, or in other places of refuge most alien to its nature and habits. Not even the sound of the organ, and of one or two flutes which accompanied the psalmody, prevented her from following her guide into the chancel of the church.

(After more adventures, Jeanie at length reaches Stamford, where her journey nears its end.)

At Stamford our heroine was deposited in safety by her communicative guide. She obtained a place in the coach, which, although termed a light one, and accommodated with no fewer than six horses, only reached London on the afternoon of the second day.

By Mutual Consent. ❁ ❁

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ *By C. RANDOLPH-LICHFIELD.*

How a man became a burglar in order to steal his own child.

A SOUND like the rattle of a dog-chain stirred the still night air, and the moving shadow on the lawn stretching up to the low, rambling house, hesitated and slowly drew nearer to the tall shrubs: Next it stole forward, rustling the leaves softly, and advanced towards the window, the lower half of which was open. Then the shadow became a man, whose face looked preternaturally haggard as it caught the moonlight.

As he leant in at the window he heard the dog-chain rattle again, and a low growl accompanied the sound. It issued from round a corner of the house, and the man quickly withdrew his head, as if to trace the exact meaning of it.

Again the chain rattled—this time, it seemed, against the edge of the kennel, and the dog grunted. The man gathered that the dog had got back into its kennel and settled itself again; and leaning through the window, he gently moved from the window-sill a big bowl of flowers which stood in his way.

He climbed noiselessly into what seemed to be a passage leading to the hall of the house; and running his fingers along the walls on either side of him for guidance, he went forward cautiously, treading noiselessly the soft carpet. When his left hand touched the jamb of a door he stopped, listening.

The place was so silent that he could hear his own quick-coming breath. Not a glimmer of light showed anywhere; only from behind him came the faint glow of moonlight, reflected by the white window-sill on which the broad beams fell.

He drew a silver match-box from his pocket and struck a light noiselessly on his coat-sleeve. In the quivering light he rapidly surveyed his position.

He stood in the middle of the hall, with the staircase near, and four doors and the front door before him. He glanced up the stairs eagerly, and turned towards them; and, dropping the match, trod on it lightly. As he lowered his head in doing this his eye

detected a little rift of light showing through the key-hole of the first door on his right: Creeping gently up to the door, he bent his ear to the crack, and listened.

Faint sounds, like the scratching of a quill-pen on paper, the cheering hum of a good coal-fire, and other slight, indistinguishable things reached him; and, with an indrawn sigh, he stole back to the foot of the stairs and began slowly to ascend:

The first door on the landing stood open an inch or two. He pushed it wider open, and leant in, listening. The moonlight streaming through the window, the blinds of which were up, revealed to him the usual furniture of a well-appointed bedroom, and that it was unoccupied. He passed to the next door, and after listening for some seconds, gently opened it.

The dim glow of a night-light enabled him to discern a child's cot in one corner of the room, and in the opposite corner a bed, in which evidently someone lay asleep:

The man looked down at the linoleum-covered floor as if calculating the degree of sound his soft shoes would make upon it; then he moved stealthily across to the cot, wherein lay a baby boy of about eighteen months, sleeping soundly:

As he leant over the cot, a soft look stole into his eyes and his lips parted in a tender smile.

Gently, with almost motherly touch, he tucked the bedclothes round the little form, and lifted it out. It moved wakeningly; and seeing its comforter hanging by a ribbon round its neck, the man pressed the teat between the little lips, then drew the blanket and quilt round the plump little limbs.

The baby accepted the comforter, and nestled his head more restfully in the bend of the man's arm, when the kidnapper stole out of the room and crept downstairs.

In the hall the man hesitated, considering whether it would be safer to draw the bolts of the front door and escape that way, or to scramble out of the house by the way he had

come: The baby made an awkward bundle in his thick, slippery wrappings. But the man turned finally from the door, and, guided by the moonlight at the window, advanced down the passage.

He had scarcely reached the end, when a door behind him was opened quickly, and a broad beam of yellow lamp-light swept across the hall, seeming to carry with it the tall, graceful figure of a woman.

The man drew back against the wall, and held himself in the shadow.

The woman moved to the foot of the stairs; then, apparently feeling the cold air from the open window, she turned and came quickly down the passage.

The man drew a short breath and pressed further back into the dark corner. He was in a *cul-de-sac*, and he could see the woman distinctly, but he hoped he would not be visible to her eyes, dazzled by the bright light in the room from which she had just issued.

She came straight down the passage without the least hesitation, almost brushing against the bundle in his arms. She shut the window, latched it, and perceiving the bowl of flowers out of place, restored it to the middle of the window-sill.

"What a lovely night," she murmured, pausing at the window and looking obliquely up at the moon.

The man's eyes searched her face eagerly from the dark corner, and he held his breath. He felt her skirts brush his legs as she turned and began to retrace her steps along the passage. His gaze followed her till she disappeared into one of the rooms opposite that from which the bright light gleamed across the hall. He supposed she had gone in search of something, and that it would be dangerous for him to attempt to raise the window and escape before she returned to the other room.

He raised the baby higher on his breast, and gently laid his cheek upon its muffled head.

In a few moments the woman reappeared. She walked down the beam of light with a book in her hand, rapidly turning over the pages, and, as if on a sudden impulse, the man stepped out from the corner and advanced slowly towards her. She stopped instantly on hearing his first movement.

"Who is there?" she said, in a low voice of surprise and alarm.

He stepped into the light and she recoiled.

"Denis!" she cried:

He held his bundle out to her:

"I came for this," he said gravely:

"Oh, Heavens! my boy!" she exclaimed, starting forward and snatching the bundle from his arms. "You wretch! You villain!"

"Of course!" he returned bitterly; "no doubt I am a great deal more. But he is mine, too, and I love him. And I did not come merely to take him from you—not maliciously, but enviously, to have him myself. I should not have abandoned the idea if you had not come down the passage to close the window."

She brushed past him and entered the lighted room. He followed her, still speaking.

"But I saw you, Marion—and—and somehow I realised he was not so much to me as to you; only half what I—I——"

His words failed him, and he stood, cap in hand, just within the doorway, and watched her throw herself into a low chair and rock the baby on her bosom in a passion of mingled emotions.

She did not glance at him, she did not speak; she was totally unconscious for the moment that the world contained anything more than herself and her child. Her frantic kisses completed the awakening of the baby, who struggled into a sitting posture in her arms and threw his head upon her shoulder with a little gurgle of love.

Then the woman remembered the man: She turned her flaming eyes on him.

"Thief!" she ejaculated.

The man gnawed his drooping moustache and shifted his gaze from her to the table, littered with many sheets of fresh manuscript.

"I at least gave you credit for being incapable of such brutality as robbing me of the only thing I have to love," she said scornfully.

He looked at her dully before he answered:

"Your confidence was not entirely misplaced," he responded, in a low tone. "The influence of your presence—your mere propinquity when you shut the window, decided me not to carry him away. I should have done so. I have longed to have him; and, but for our deed of separation, I think I am entitled to him. I am not quite certain on the point. But I laid my plans with very little regard to your feelings. When I—when you were close to me again, and the boy in my arms, I realised he was probably all you love in the world, and only half I care for. I may point out to you that I

came forward quite voluntarily to surrender him to you."

"I am not quite sure of that; you may have felt you were detected," she muttered relentlessly.

"You were never quite sure of anything that was to my credit," he returned bitterly, "or I should not have had to steal into your house, after weeks of searching for you, in order to kiss my own child."

"Under the deed of separation you surrendered him to me," she said, a trifle more gently, her heart perhaps touched by his last words.

The baby wrestled himself to his feet, and, looking at the man, stretched out his arms to him, as if loving recollection had been suddenly awakened in his mind.

"Um-h," he murmured.

The man started forward, a bright light in his dark eyes; but he stopped short, as the mother pressed down the little outstretched arm and held the boy more closely to her.

"You agreed to surrender him to my absolute control," she persisted. "And yet like a thief—"

"I did it heedlessly," he replied, leaning against a corner of the table and fumbling with his cap. "If I had realised how—how I love—the child, I should perhaps have been content to bear my troubles patiently, in order to remain near him. I was badgered into it, Marion."

"You mean to imply that I drove you into your part of our agreement to separate?" she said, rising.

"Scarcely that. I mean that the discord and your weird faculty for misconstruing things predisposed me towards the notion and dulled my understanding of—of—"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Are you writing a novel? Do you find the allowance so inadequate that—"

"The allowance is ample. I am writing for the love of writing—for a sense of companionship baby is yet too young to afford me."

He glanced at her quickly, keenly, and perceived the boy's arms outstretched to him again.

"He wants to come to me!" he exclaimed, throwing down his cap and taking a step towards them. "Will you deny him the right to kiss his father when he wills? That is *not* in the agreement!"

"He cannot really know you; he is much too young to remember you so long," she said coldly.

She saw the man turn white and bite his

lip at her words. Her eyes softened, and she held the baby out to him.

He took him eagerly and sat down in a chair out of the full light of the shaded lamp. He pressed the boy's plump little hands and kissed them hurriedly; rubbed the round cheeks with his finger-tips, and murmured a stream of half-inaudible words, and broken, disjointed sentences. He seemed for the time to forget the woman's presence, but he had not done so; it was because he had not done so that he strove to hold himself in hand and keep his twitching face from betraying what he felt.

And the woman stood leaning back against the mantelpiece, her hands clenched together behind her, and watched them out of the corners of her lustrous eyes, with scarcely a tremor of her lips to evince the battle that was being waged in her heart.

Suddenly the baby, delighted by the sparkle of a small diamond in his father's tie-pin, laughed a low, crowing laugh, and rolled over on his side in a spasm of merriment.

The man raised his head quickly, and threw a look of challenge at the woman; then, smiling, hugged the baby closely to him. The woman smiled faintly, a cold, death-like smile, and moved slightly, uneasily.

"It's a queer little laugh," she said quietly. "He's a very happy disposition—he laughs at anything." She stretched out her arms, and moved towards them. "Come, darling; mamma must take you back to bed."

The father rose quickly and moved back a step, as if his impulse were to take the boy out of her reach. But he checked himself and, kissing the child, handed him over; and the dull look of indifference returned to his face as he did so.

"You will find the hall-door a more convenient mode of egress than the passage-window," said Marion, sweeping past him to the hall.

He bowed silently, and held the door more widely open for her.

When she had gone, he returned to the table and picked up his cap. He stood for some seconds absently flicking the edge of the table with it. Then he strolled across the room to the fireplace, and sitting down in a low arm-chair, whiled away a few thoughtful moments dangling his cap between his knees.

But his mood was not restful, and presently he rose and began toying with the

nick-nacks upon the mantelpiece. There were numerous framed photographs, miniature vases, and copies of quaint idols—a hundred queer trifles; and a bottle of lavender salts, which reminded him vaguely of distant days. He picked it up and smelt them, and the odour stimulated in his mind a thousand trifling little recollections of his hours of courtship; Marion was seldom without lavender salts.

He replaced the bottle on the mantelpiece, and turned his attention to less distressing things, including a *carte-de-visite* portrait of himself, in a silver frame. He was just a little surprised to see it there. He would have expected Marion to put away from her everything that reminded her of him:

"You have *not* gone?"

He swung round towards the door and beheld her standing there, with the baby still in her arms. The change in her bearing was so marked, and the difference in her tone so in accord with it, that he detected it instantly. By that instinct which is given to women often and to men rarely, he knew that she had brought the boy back because she thought he had not gone; because, in her mother's love for the child, she had taken pity on his father's love for him; because the boy was his.

"No, I have not gone," he replied, with more confidence. "I am sorry to outstay my welcome—or, I should say, your tolerance, perhaps; but I have something to say."

"Yes?" she said interrogatively, advancing into the room:

She sat down in the low arm-chair he had vacated, and propped the boy up in her lap.

Her husband stood with his hands folded behind him, his head and shoulders bent, a very grave look on his face; and he ran his eyes nervously over the rug beneath his feet. Once or twice he drew his breath and opened his lips as if to speak, but checked himself. Then suddenly, after a furtive side-glance at her pale, anxious face, he dropped on one knee beside her.

"Marion," he said, "for the sake of the boy, won't you take me back?"

She rose quickly, and, stepping aside, drew back, panting and trembling.

Slowly he got to his feet and stood awaiting her answer, his eyes turned to the half-open door.

"No," she whispered.

He stiffened visibly, and without glancing at her, picked up his cap from the table.

Then, as if he had heard an echo of her voice, and in the sound had detected the true note that was ringing in her heart, he looked at her eagerly.

She was very white, and her lips were trembling. Her eyelids drooped heavily, but from under them her eyes looked into his with almost hypnotising intensity.

"Marion," he said, "will you take me back for my own sake?"

"Most joyfully I will, Denis," she answered very softly, drawing to him with upturned face and lips closed for his kiss.

"Um-h," murmured the boy lovingly, catching hold of the lapel of the man's coat and leaning towards him:

✻ ✻ *THE VIRTUE OF LAUGHTER.* ✻ ✻

*Oh, who can estimate the worth,
Of sunny-eyed and dimpled mirth?
How desolate would be the earth
If it were not for laughter:*

*Of all the cures by man possessed,
To cheer the heart by grief oppressed,
There's none has power, it is confessed,
That can compare to laughter:*

*So, for each sorrow ye endure,
Unless ye nourish it, be sure
Ye have at hand an easy cure,
Ha, ha! 'Tis only laughter:*

*'Tis good for young, 'tis good for old,
It is more precious far than gold;
Then laugh as long as you can hold,
Hurrah, for jolly laughter!*

Books in Brief. * * *

The gist of a novel in the form of a short story—this is our idea of a popular review. We have selected this month "*The Artful Miss Dill*," by F. Frankfort Moore, among whose most popular works are "*A Gray Eye or So*," "*The Jessamy Bride*," and "*The Fatal Gift*"; and "*The Bishop's Apron*," by W. Somerset Maugham, who made his name with "*Lisa of Lambeth*," a powerful story of slum life.

THE ARTFUL MISS DILL. * * *

* * * By F. FRANKFORT MOORE.
(Hutchinson & Co. 6s.)

I.

THERE are cities of the day and the night: The Republics of South America are rich in the latter. Night is their best friend.

This is just what Anthony Gresham thought as he left the Hotel Bolivar at Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, and strolled into the Opera House.

A dozen seats or so in front of him, sat a girl with a creamy complexion and hair the tinge of a copperbeach when the sun is shining on it.

On the way back to his hotel, Gresham walked down a dark and lonely road—which was unwise. But he was in no mood for sleep. Just as he was retracing his steps, he heard the sound of wheels, and stepped back among the aloes and cacti. A close carriage pulled up on the road not fifty feet from where he stood. At the same moment, he heard another sound—a stifled cry—and a man jumped out.

Another man sprang down from the seat beside the driver, and put a whistle to his lips. There was an answering whistle from the trees further up the road, and a crash of breaking glass. The second man rushed round to the other side of the carriage, and was almost knocked down by someone against whom he had run—a woman whose bare shoulders shone white in the faint light—a woman whose bare head was radiant as if it had been crowned with gold.

She cried out, but her shriek was stifled by a cloak flung over her head.

As the girl was forced inside the carriage, Gresham fired at the first figure that appeared returning from the struggle. The horse gave a bound, and Gresham jumped on the step, clinging to the iron rail of the roof.

At last, with the aid of the revolver, the driver was prevailed upon to stop. Her face

was at the window; it was scarcely whiter than when he had seen it at the Opera House. She cried out in English: "Have you shot anyone?"

"I heard you cry," said Gresham. "The men who carried you off are coming towards us; our only chance is to drive on."

On their way back to Caracas, they were again attacked by Garcia's ruffians—he was a captain in the Venezuelan army—but escaped without being hurt, although the horse was shot dead. Then they had to walk. Miss Dill explained that she lived with her father in Caracas, that Garcia was a *protégé* of President Castro, and that the President suspected her father of corresponding with the revolutionary leader, General Matos.

II.

WHEN they reached the hotel, Miss Dill introduced Gresham to her father, Captain Dill—a tall, white-moustached, military-looking man—and explained what had happened.

The Captain looked thoughtful. "He mustn't go back to his own hotel," he said, "or he will be assassinated. By the way, Mr. Gresham, are you any relation to Sir Theodore Gresham?"

"Oh, yes. He is my uncle."

Gresham parted from Miss Dill that night after a sentimental little scene, with a throb of passion beating through it. She had told him that her father was considered to be an adventurer, and that she was known as the artful Miss Dill.

"I've got your bag from the Hotel Bolivar," said the Captain, the next morning. "It was just as well you slept here. The man whom they poniarded, taking him for you, was a local Jew, not up to your shoulder."

Gresham went down to La Guayra to take ship, in the society of a German naval officer

whom the Venezuelans dare not touch: About a dozen police were on hand at the station, but when they saw Gresham's companion they were glaringly disconcerted: He reached the ship without misadventure, and set out for England:

III.

GRESHAM did not meet the Dills again until some months later, when he was at the London Opera with his cousin Doris (she had refused him a year ago because everyone else thought that she would not) and her mother. Captain Dill, with the proverbial astuteness of the adventurer, had looked up some old papers concerning the early marriage of Doris' father to an Italian girl. Sir Theodore Gresham, thinking the Italian girl was dead, had married again; and Dill alone knew that, in consequence of the first marriage, Doris was illegitimate.

Gresham's party at the Opera House were busily engaged in discussing Esther Dill's marvelous beauty:

"Now that you have found out all about her," said Gresham, "I may tell you that her name is Miss Dill, and that the man beside her is her father."

"What! You know all about her?" cried Lady Gresham.

IV.

CAPTAIN DILL called on Sir Theodore Gresham the next day and explained the situation with regard to that early marriage—that the Italian girl had not died until after Doris' birth. Sir Theodore was overwhelmed, and the Captain left him without the slightest idea that Sir Theodore would tell Gresham what had happened: Then he went back to his daughter, who had been much interested at a dinner the night before in what Gresham had told her about his friend the great scientist, Ernest Bathgate, and how that eminent young man had been treated by the two great spending departments of the State, the War Office and the Admiralty: Her indignation at their stupidity, had given Miss Dill an acute interest in Bathgate. So great was this interest that when Gresham proposed to her, in a half-hearted way, she refused him, and resolved to devote her energies to making Bathgate's inventions a success.

Not content with helping Bathgate, Miss Dill, with her customary "artfulness," made Gresham understand that he really loved Doris, although the latter had refused him:

V.

It had not occurred to Captain Dill that Sir Theodore would of his own accord make his nephew acquainted with the whole pitiful story of his infatuation of nearly thirty years ago, and that, in consequence of this information, Gresham would feel compelled to shield Doris by marrying her: In the meantime, he was greatly interested in a concession which he was trying to float, and asked his daughter to exert her influence with Bathgate to give him a scientifically encouraging letter for the prospectus of his company.

"I will give you some news from him that is worth half-a-dozen enticing prospectuses," said she.

"He has asked you to marry him?"

"He has; but that is nothing compared with the news he has told me. I want you to give me those documents you have about Sir Theodore's first marriage. I felt it my duty to warn Mr. Bathgate of the utter worthlessness of your concession, and he, in return, informed me that a friend of his had just returned from the spot, and that your precious concession is worth at least a million and a quarter!"

VI.

THE next morning Dill presented his daughter with the documents about Sir Theodore's Italian marriage, and she went off to Sir Theodore:

"Doris won't marry her cousin," said the latter. "She thinks he is asking her out of pity."

"I believe I can persuade her," said Miss Dill.

"My poor child," she whispered: "You love Anthony Gresham—you have always loved him."

"I love him, that is why——" She gave a little sob.

Then Miss Dill explained that Sir Theodore's Italian wife had a husband still living when she married Sir Theodore:

Doris threw herself into Miss Dill's arms. "My dear, dear friend—my dear, dear sister: You are the truest woman in the world, and yet for a while—only a little while—I thought you artful."

"And so I am," said Miss Dill: "I am Dill's artful, red-headed girl. Here is Mr. Gresham: He will tell you that that is what people called me."

"I promised that you should see my happiness," said Doris, giving herself to Anthony:

"I have my reward," said the artful Miss Dill:

THE BISHOP'S APRON. * * *

By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM.

(Chapman & Hall. 6s.)

I.
THEODORE SPRATTE, Vicar of St. Gregory's, South Kensington, and Canon of Tercanbury, was the youngest son of the first Earl Spratte, Lord Chancellor of England:

When he was left a widower with two young children, his sister Sophia, who had remained unmarried, came to live with him: In course of time, Lionel, the son, grew up, entered the Church, and became his curate: His daughter Winnie was twenty-one, and in her fragile, delicate way as pretty as a shepherdess of Dresden china: She had all the charm of innocence, and such knowledge of the world as three seasons in London and the daily example of her father could give her:

"I see that the Bishop of Barchester is dangerously ill," said Lionel, as the family sat at lunch:

"I'm told he's dying," answered the Canon:

"I wonder who'll succeed him," said Lionel:

The Canon smiled: "I shouldn't be at all surprised if Lord Stonehenge offered the bishopric to me."

"You'd look rather a toff in leggings," observed his elder brother, Lord Spratte:

The Canon turned to his daughter: "And what have you been doing this morning, Winnie?"

"I went to see the model dwellings that Mr. Railing is interested in." Winnie blushed a little under her uncle's stare:

"Who is Mr. Railing?" inquired Lionel: "One of the Worcestershire Railings?"

"No, just a common or garden Railing," said the Canon: "I shall write a little note to him, and, with your permission, Sophia, ask him to tea afterwards."

"Is he presentable?" asked Lady Sophia:

"He's a gentleman," cried Winnie: "And he's as beautiful as a Greek god." She flushed and dropped her eyes:

II.

WHEN Canon Spratte strolled into the Athenæum one afternoon, he found a note waiting for him from young Lord Wroxham, who wanted to marry Winnie: They had been playfellows as children, and he was

devoted to her: At that moment Winnie was walking with Mr. Railing as they returned from his temperance lecture:

Railing was three-and-twenty. He was very dark, but his skin, smooth as polished ivory, had the glowing colour of Titian's young Adonis; and his hair, worn long and admirably curling, his fine, sincere eyes, were dark too: With his broad forehead, straight nose, his well-shaped, sensual mouth, he was indeed very handsome:

"And that's why I call myself a Christian Socialist," he said, "because I believe that to these two belong the future—to Christ and to the people."

"Do you despise me?" she cried at length: "I'm so ashamed of my own ignorance and indifference."

He looked at Winnie with those passionate eyes of his, and his whole heart yearned for her. Then he asked her to marry him, and she consented:

The next day, with her father's knowledge, Lord Wroxham called for the same purpose:

Winnie refused him: Then came the difficult task of explaining to her father: "I'm already engaged to be married, papa," she said:

"You? And to whom, pray?"

"Bertram Railing."

The Canon went away to talk over the situation with an old flame of his, Mrs. Fitzherbert:

"Didn't you say," asked Mrs. Fitzherbert, "that Mr. Railing's mother was the widow of a coal-heaver? I wonder what she's like?"

"Yes; and his sister teaches in a Board School."

"She must be an exemplary young person: They must be awful. I wonder if Winnie has thought of that?"

"By Jove!" cried the Canon: His mind was excessively alert: He laughed aloud: "You've saved the whole situation." His plan was that Winnie should see Railing's relations, and then—

Winnie went to see Railing's mother, and she was awful: But it was worse when the artful Canon invited Mrs. Railing to tea at his own house, and she came—with her daughter: "I'm quite sure," the Canon said

to Winnie; "that you'll soon accustom yourself to their slight eccentricities of diction, to their little vulgarities of manner. 'Kind hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith than Norman blood.'"

But Winnie could hold herself no longer. "Oh, they were awful!" she cried, putting her hands to her eyes. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

III.

AND so, when Lord Wroxham came to see Winnie, she told him that she was very unhappy and did not know what to do.

"Can't you love me, Winnie?" he asked. "I love you with all my being. You are all I care for in the world. You're my very life. Ah, yes, I love you with all my heart and soul."

There was a silence. Then, with a blush, Winnie put her hand on his arm.

"You didn't mean it when you said you couldn't love me?" he murmured vehemently.

"I don't know," she whispered.

Quickly, eagerly, he took her in his arms and kissed her lips. "Say you'll marry me, Winnie?"

"I'll do anything to make you happy."

"Kiss me. I love you."

Blushing, she put her lips to his, and the soft pressure made him tremble with delight.

Then the Canon's voice was heard on the stairs, and Winnie quickly tore herself from her lover.

"Canon Spratte," said Wroxham, "I want to tell you that Winnie has just promised to be my wife."

The Canon opened his arms, and Winnie hid her face on his bosom. "All's well that ends well," he cried. "I knew she was devoted to you, my boy. Trust me for knowing a woman's character."

When Wroxham had gone, the Canon was made to understand that Winnie was still engaged to Railing. "Oh, papa, you must help me," she cried.

"Do I understand," asked the Canon, "that the fact that Mrs. Railing drops her aitches and drinks gin, while her daughter is bumptious and vulgar, has had any effect upon your attachment to Mr. Railing?"

"You asked them to come here, you knew what would happen. : : : You will get me out of the scrape, father?"

And the Canon did. Railing had an imbecile sister, and the Canon sternly

declined to allow Winnie to marry into such a family. Then he once more began to consider how he might become a bishop.

IV.

THE Bishop of Barchester died, but the Canon was not offered the coveted apron: Lord Stonehenge simply proposed that he should take St. Olphert's, an insignificant deanery in the north of Wales. For the moment, the Canon was staggered. But he waited his time. His son Lionel was shilly-shallying with Gwendolen, the daughter of Sir John Durant, the wealthy brewer, who was a power in the political world, and Miss Durant admired the Canon far more than she did his son. So the Canon cut the Gordian knot by allying himself with Sir John politically, and proposed to Gwendolen, who accepted him. Then the new bishop of Barchester had an apoplectic stroke, and the Canon saw his opportunity.

The brewers, driven beyond endurance, were in full revolt against the Government. Sir John Durant headed the revolt. The Government's position was insecure, and if the liquor interest withdrew its support, a dissolution was inevitable. Canon Spratte again looked into the Athenæum and had a chat with the Prime Minister, during which he dexterously made him understand that he, Canon Spratte, could influence Sir John politically. The Prime Minister understood, and offered the Canon the bishopric of Barchester.

The Canon was about to accept this offer, when a bishop came up to the Prime Minister with a telegram in his hand. He handed the telegram to the Prime Minister. "It's to tell me that the Bishop of Sheffield died in his sleep early this morning."

"Thank you," said the Prime Minister.

Then the Canon played a bold stroke and refused the bishopric of Barchester, for Sheffield was so much more important. "It's too bad of me to take up the only moment in the day you have for recreation. I shall be seeing Durant after dinner." And, with a nod and a smile, he left the Prime Minister to his own reflections.

* * * * *

Just before dinner that evening, the Canon received a telegram. He opened it and gave a cry. "Sophia," he said to his sister, "you will be gratified to learn that the Government has offered me the vacant bishopric of Sheffield."

"Oh, papa, I'm so glad," said Winnie.

Our Pinafore Pages.

These pages are especially for the children. The stories are written in a style so simple that the little ones will not require the meanings of any of the words to be explained to them. Mothers and nurses are recommended to read these pages aloud to their charges.

THE BLUE TITMOUSE.

Which tells you how this little bird got its smart coat.

THE wind blew and blew. And it rocked the trees so hard that it threw the little nestling out of its nest. And it blew it so far away that its mamma could not find it.

There it sat. It could not fly, and it could not walk, and it had no feathers, and so it got very, very cold. It tried to call its mamma, but the wind made so much noise that it could not be heard.

Poor little birdie! No clothes and no home, and the wind so cold!

Just then a little wren, going home to her own children, found the poor little bird and took it home with her for the night. But in the morning there it was, so bare, and the cold wind was blowing again. So something had to be done for clothes.

Now Mrs. Wren was very small and had a family herself, so that she couldn't give the little baby any of her feathers, and all her neighbours were poor, too. All they had was a snug little nest, hidden somewhere in the leaves. But they were very happy, and sang all day long. And then all the golden sunshine belonged to them.

Therefore, Mr. Wren called all the neighbours together to see what could be done. They all came. There was the Blue Jay, the Yellowhammer, the Sparrow, the Bullfinch, the Thrush, the Green Linnet, and many more. Such a chirping and twittering you never heard. Everyone had something to say, and there was so much talking done that Mr. Wren called for silence, and said:

"My dear neighbours and friends: Last evening my wife, Mrs. Wren, found this poor, bare baby bird over there in the field. We do not know its parents, and as it is very chilly some clothes must be got and a home found for it."

Then they all spoke again, at once. But Mrs. Wren, in her quick and easy way,

called them to order. Mrs. Yellowhammer promised to give a yellow front for the dress, the Blue Jay would put the sleeves to it for the wings, and give some stiff feathers for the tail, while the Swallow made a cap and bib of blue, with a white trimming.

But of what use was a dress without a back to it? And everyone had given as much as possible, for all had their own little babies. But Mrs. Wren again knew what to do, so she asked for just a few plain white feathers, and then patched up the back with the remnants of the blue and yellow ones she had from the other parts. Oh, what a pretty-coloured dress it made!

How proud the little baby was of its clothes when it was dressed. It bobbed its pretty head up and down and showed its pretty yellow breast and blue wings.

But even little birds must learn something. So the Thrush said that it would teach it to make a good nest, and the Robin Redbreast would care for it until it was old enough to fly.

But then who would teach it manners and the other things a bird must know? At that they were all quiet, for they were all afraid, they didn't know enough to teach others. But here again Mrs. Wren helped them. She called to the Sparrow and said:

"Now, you haven't given any feathers, and have done nothing at all for the little one, and yet you are always so forward in other things. So just fly over to the wise old Owl, who stays at home all day long, because he can only see in the dark, and ask him to be her teacher."

Mr. Owl was very nice about it, and said he would teach the baby all it ought to know.

And so, everything being settled, they all went home, and the little Blue Titmouse grew up into one of the prettiest and smartest birds you ever saw.

THE TEN LITTLE SLAVES. * * * *

* * * By BERTHA FORTESCUE-HARRISON.

A tale about fingers and thumbs.

ONCE upon a time there lived a little boy whose name was Frank, and who thought he could order his nurse to do everything for him. He would order her to pick up and put away his toys after he was tired of playing with them, and showed so much temper if his kind nurse said he ought to do this himself, that she tidied up for him, and let him do much as he liked.

Even Frank's father and mother often received his orders, and became his slaves. It happened that Frank's grandmother came upon a visit to his parents, and she was the only one who could make Frank obey; and one day she promised to tell him a story about ten little slaves.

After tea Frank sat upon a stool before the fire at his grandmother's feet, and listened to the promised story; and this is what he heard:

"You do not perhaps know that you have ten little slaves, who are willing to obey all your orders, and work for you all day long, doing everything you tell them: Five of the little slaves are on your right side, and five on your left side; they are with you when you eat, or walk, or sleep, or stand; they never disobey you, and it is right for you to keep them busy: If you tell them to do good deeds, you will even be rewarded;

but if your heart is cruel, or wicked, the ten slaves will obey you just as quickly, although in the end you will, of course, be punished:

"Two of your slaves are short and fat, two are quite thin, and the six others rather bigger; but although they all work together, I want you to remember that there is a time when it is best to keep five little slaves in the dark, and not let them know what you are doing; and that is when you want to help someone in sorrow and trouble. When you are doing that, only let those little slaves on your right side know, and keep those on your left side out of the secret.

"Now, don't forget to keep those dear little slaves busy and clean, and whenever you want anything done—your books fetched, or your toys put away, do it yourself, with your own hands, for the fingers on your hands are the ten willing little slaves I have told you about, and they can do all the work you want done far better than anyone else can do it for you."

Frank kissed his kind grandmother, and thanked her for the pretty story, which he promised never to forget:

He became a great and honoured man, who used his ten little slaves to the best advantage, and he made them do work which has made him beloved all the world over:

* * * A FAIRY'S SONG. * * *

BY H. ELLIOTT-BALL:

*Will you go with me to Fay-land,
To the gnomes' and elskins' play-land,
Where the sun and western breeze
Make the blossom on the trees
And the fruit to grow together*

*All the year?
Where the season's ever Spring,
And the birdies always sing,
Will you go with me to Fay-land,
Childee dear?*

*We will sail on gnats and midges
High above the meads and hedges;
In the smile the sunbeam smiles
We will drift for miles and miles,
Then we'll bathe in dewy diamonds
Crystal clear:*

*We will breathe in perfumed bowers
Of the breath exhaled by flowers,
If you'll go with me to Fay-land,
Childee dear!*

*Will you go with me to Fay-land,
Where the nights are light as day-land,
Where the glow-worms always shine,
Where the children never pine,
Where they never have a heart-ache
Nor ever see a tear?*

*Will you go where rainbows sleep
When the clouds have ceased to weep?
Will you go with me to Fay-land,
Thou sweet, wee Childee dear?*

MR. BLACK MAN.

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE.

The story of a kind little girl.

"PLEASE tell me some more about him," asked Mollie.

There was no answer, for Susan, the nursemaid, had an interesting book, and was sitting comfortably toasting herself by the nursery fire.

"Do, please, Susan," continued Mollie, as she drew near and gave Susan's arm a little joggle.

"Dear, dear, what a fidget you are, Miss Mollie," said Susan sharply, without raising her eyes from the page. "Tell you what?"

"About that black man; you know, Susan."

"I'm busy now; go and play with your dolls."

"I can't, because they're all asleep in bed now, and you promised me ever so long ago that if I were good you'd tell me some more."

Susan was not ill-natured, and she had nearly reached the end of her interesting story, so she said:

"Well, just wait a minute or two until I finish this page, and then I'll tell you."

So Mollie had to wait patiently a little longer until Susan had finished her story.

"And now tell me, please, dear Susan, about the black man up the chimney," urged patient little Mollie, as the book was closed with a snap.

"It's nearly bedtime now, and I've told you lots of times before—well, then, just for five minutes. He hides up the chimney and he listens, and he listens, and he listens, and he listens."

Mollie fixed curious eyes on the round, dark opening at the back of the grate.

"What does he listen for?"

"To hear if any little girl or boy is naughty or cross."

"Is he there now?"

"I can't say just now exactly," was Susan's cautious answer.

"Couldn't you look and see if he's there? Susan, do give a peep and see."

"He wouldn't like it; he'd be angry, ever so angry."

"Would he? What would he do, Susan, if he were angry?"

"Oh, he'd make a noise and growl."

"How?"

The sound that Susan made was something like the sound of wind in the chimney. Mollie, sitting on her little hassock, huddled

herself closely together, and rested her chin on her knees.

"And what would he do then, if he were angry—dreadfully angry?"

"Oh, he'd come down the chimney."

"Yes?"

"And he'd catch hold of the naughty little boy or girl, and carry them off."

"Where?"

"Oh, I don't know; but a long way from here!"

Mollie drew nearer to Susan, and gazed at the round chimney opening.

"What's he like, Susan?"

"Oh, ugly—awfully ugly!"

"Is he black?"

"Yes, very black."

"But suppose the naughty little boy or girl was sorry; wouldn't he let them come back?"

Susan shook her head knowingly.

"He would if they promised to be very good."

"Doesn't anyone love the black man, Susan?"

"No; nobody."

"Wouldn't he like somebody to love him?"

"Well, perhaps; but nobody ever will."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because—because—well, because they won't; and it's your bed-time now, Miss Mollie, so come along and have your glass of milk."

"But, Susan, can't I just wait a little——"

Susan glanced at the chimney, and Mollie was silent at once.

She did not ask any more questions, which was, perhaps, as well, for Susan had answered just about enough; but at the last, when the nursemaid was tucking her up in bed, she said:

"Susan, I am so sorry for him."

"Oh, you needn't be sorry for him; he's all right. He won't come near, for you've been a good girl to-day."

"Susan, you won't forget to tell mother that when she comes home? Tell her I've been good."

"All right."

Then with a good-night kiss Susan departed, and Mollie lay quiet and still in her little bed, watching the circle of light thrown by the lowered gas-jet upon the darkened chimney. Presently there came a far-off moaning sound in the chimney.

"Poor Mr. Black Man," said Mollie, "how lonely he must feel away up there in the chimney."

She listened for him to come again, but she did not hear him, and soon after that Mollie was fast asleep. The next morning, while she was playing with her dolls, she thought a great deal about the black man: "Mr. Black Man up the chimney," she called him. For some reason or other Susan was rather cross to-day, and when Mollie asked her some more questions she only replied in a very sharp tone:

"Don't be silly, Miss Mollie; go and play with your dolls. Little girls shouldn't worry and bother with stupid questions."

"They're not stupid questions," said Mollie to her favourite doll, Miss Violet Pansy May. "Never mind, I will talk to you, my sweetest."

But nice and kind and good as Miss Violet Pansy May was, she could not tell Mollie what that little girl so wished to know. A splendid plan was forming itself now in Mollie's small mind. She felt so sorry for poor Mr. Black Man all alone up in the chimney! No one loved him, that was certain, for Susan had said so, and Susan knew all about him. "If someone loved him," thought Mollie, "perhaps he wouldn't be so unkind."

The longer she thought of it the more she wished that someone would be kind to Mr. Black Man. Suppose she herself were to be good and kind to him? Suppose that she, Mollie, were to show him that she wanted him to be comfortable and happy, not moaning all alone up in the chimney?

She wondered if Mr. Black Man liked reading, because she had a book—a pretty book of fairy stories with coloured pictures—that she could lend him. Well, at any rate, she would lend it to him; she would wrap it up in paper and lay it behind the screen with the red poppies on it that stood in the fireplace in her bedroom. He sometimes came in that chimney, she knew, for hadn't she heard him there?

So she wrapped up in brown paper her pretty fairy-story book. It had a pale blue cover, and she could not help hoping that Mr. Black Man's fingers were not very sooty with being up the chimney. She herself had been so careful with her book. She left in the fireplace the little parcel addressed to "Mr. Black Man up the chimney." She spelt the words properly, for she asked Susan.

The next day, when she looked for the parcel, it was gone! Of course she was glad of this, but she could not help hoping that Mr. Black Man would bring it back to her. Certainly he did so, for she found it a little while after on the top shelf of her toy cupboard.

"Yes, I found that in the fireplace in your bedroom," said Susan, as she saw Mollie take the parcel and look at it. "If my auntie had sent me a nice book, I would not put it in the fireplace."

"I wanted to lend it to Mr. Black Man," replied Mollie.

Susan stared at her:

"Well, I never! You are a strange child."

After this Mollie did not say much to Susan about Mr. Black Man. She felt that she really knew more about him than Susan did, for after all she, Mollie, was sorry for him, and even beginning to be fond of him in a way, and it was certain that Susan was not. She found another plan. She wrote a long letter to him, and this, when Susan was not looking, she poked up the chimney as far as she could.

Afterwards—a long time afterwards—when people told Mollie that there was no Mr. Black Man, she could hardly believe them, although she knew, of course, that they did not mean to tell her what was not true. She knew there *was* a Mr. Black Man, for had she not lent him a book; had she not written a letter to him, and, best of all, did she not love him? She often thought that, perhaps, she was the only one who did:

BILL'S WORLD.

*If I could make the world, I would
Not make a salty sea.
I'd fill it up with lemonade,
And let in children free.*

*On every mountain, cape, and stream
I'd paint its name, so we
Would never have to study them
In a geography:*

*Addition and division I
Would not have made at all:
I wouldn't have a thing but games
For children who are small.*

*I'm sure if I made such a world
It would be fine to see,
And all the children that there are
Would say "Hurrah!" for me:*

The Engine-Driver's Son. *

Telling of the unexpected result of a practical joke.

WILLIE THURSTON was a high-spirited, stout-hearted boy of twelve; he had long, curly hair, a smooth, white skin, and handsome, expressive eyes. He was a pleasant, intelligent boy, beloved by all the employees at the Moxton Railway Station.

His father, Stephen Thurston, was an engine-driver—"a steady, reliable man"—so ran the reports of his superiors. Willie's mother was a poor descendant of one of the oldest and noblest East Anglian families; and she had come to Moxton as a maid to a noblewoman, and had married the worthy engine-driver. She died when Willie was eight years old.

It was from her that the boy had inherited his delicate skin and flowing hair, while from his father he had inherited his robust, muscular frame, his proud, sensitive disposition, and sharp, restless eyes. The boy was quick to learn and almost always at the head of his class.

That day the train driven by Mr. Thurston was timed to reach the terminus at 5.50, and Willie set out in good time to meet his father and walk home with him. When he reached the bridge he stopped to look down upon the lines and watch the making-up of the trains.

"Your father is on the 5.50 to-day, isn't he, Willie?"

Willie turned and saw two of the men employed at the station.

"Yes, Mr. Harwood," replied the boy. "And I think he is to start to-morrow morning with the 7.20."

"He knows all about it, the young rascal!" laughed Harwood. "Come along, Jack, let's have a drink." Then, turning to the boy: "Will you have one, Willie?"

It was not an unusual thing for the men to give Willie a glass of cider, for they all loved the engine-driver's boy. So Willie proudly followed the two men, who ordered brandy for themselves and the promised glass of cider for their youthful companion.

The boy had drunk about half, when one of the men, who had whispered a few words

to his mate unseen by Willie, asked him to go outside and look for one of the porters whom they expected to see. When young Thurston had left the house the two wretches poured a quantity of brandy into the cider. A sudden stroke of genius on their part—a splendid joke! Make the boy tipsy—they would have some fun out of that!

Willie returned shortly afterwards, and told them that he had been unable to find the porter. The men replied that it did not matter, and Willie took up his glass to finish the cider.

As soon as the glass touched his lips, Willie perceived that some trick had been played upon him, but his pride would not allow him to draw back; he finished the liquor recklessly, thanked the men, and went off to the station to meet his father. The men were about to follow, when some of their fellows entered, and they gave up the idea of witnessing the result of their joke.

Willie did not meet his father, for the engine-driver was nearly home before the boy reached the station. Tired out by a long spell of duty, Thurston had taken a short cut home, anxious to have a wash and get to bed, and leaving the stoker to put up the engine.

Willie was allowed to go anywhere about the station. He was well known to all the men, and nobody thought of stopping him. He soon found the engine, No. 457, and walked round it in a sprightly manner, whistling as he went, surveying the monster with the air of one thoroughly experienced in such things. How it shone and glistened, with its giant wheels and its long bars of white steel!

Willie did not understand what was the matter, but a peculiar thrill went through him. His veins seemed filled with fire and his eyes flashed. He could not contain himself, he who was usually so gentle; he was seized with a mad desire to get upon the engine just for one minute! He *must* do it.

He looked furtively around. Some men were working at a distance from him, but

nobody was near the Arrow, as the engine was named; nobody could prevent him.

Like a cat the boy scrambled on to the engine. How proud he felt as he stood there. What a splendid position to be in, master of that huge piece of machinery! Quietly he opened the door of the furnace, which had not yet been raked out. Phew! How hot it was! Yes, here was the manometer, and there was the water-gauge; both must be carefully watched while on a journey, his father had told him so.

And there, straight in front of him as he looked through, the engine would creep or fly at the will of the driver. And just think that all one had to do was to turn that piece of iron, ever so little, and the engine would move!

A little turn, only a little, just to make the engine move one yard! The temptation was too strong for the boy in his excited condition. The brandy was doing its work; he could not resist the desire. Just a yard! He *must* do it!

A jet of steam! Another! Then a third! A puff of smoke, and the heavy mass quivers and slowly moves forward!

One of the men, alarmed at the sound, drops his shovel and starts towards the engine. Willie, terribly frightened now, hesitates, gets confused, and tries to stop the engine; but in his terror he turns the lever with all his strength the wrong way, and the engine runs over the metals with increasing speed.

How lightly it rushes forward! Onward, onward, it goes with terrible speed, as though to justify its name Arrow.

The men look in bewilderment at the monster as it rushes along the line; the station-master flourishes his arms in mad fashion; the pointsman tumbles into his box with the half-defined intention of turning the engine on to a siding; but it is too late. The Arrow has flown past on the Rommell line.

The old pointsman has just time to notice the figure of little Willie standing in his father's place, petrified with fear, his long hair flowing behind in the smoke, his large eyes wide open, and his deathly-pale face

wearing a look which seemed to ask for pardon and help—and the Arrow is gone!

Far away down the line Willie can see two men wildly waving their hands; but what can they do? Out of the way! They scramble off the line helter-skelter, and the engine rushes past with a mighty snort of defiance.

The station-master hurries to the telegraph, but his message has scarcely been transmitted to the next station ere the Arrow is seen approaching like a whirlwind. It is too late to do anything there.

If the boy could only regain his confidence for one second! He alone can conquer the monster! So they shout and yell to him to try to turn the lever, but in vain; with a loud roar the engine has shot through the station.

And it is now a single line! There are only two stations to pass, and there will inevitably be a collision with the 6.40 passenger train. There is only one thing to be done in order to prevent an awful catastrophe, and there is just time left in which to do it.

Once more a message goes over the wires: "Send the runaway engine on to the siding and throw it off the rails!" How anxiously they awaited the reply from the second station, and how relieved they are when the answer comes back:

"All right!"

At Crastock Station all is hurry-scurry. The points are changed, and all wait for the runaway with breathless anxiety. Here it comes at a terrible rate, panting and snorting, leaving a cloud of smoke behind it: They see the boy on his knees, his hands raised in prayer, as his pious mother had taught him when a child. They fancy they see his lips move, but he is gone like a flash.

It is done. The Arrow has left the main track and is speeding along the rusty metals of a siding. Two seconds more—

A terrible crash; a roar; a shower of splinters; the hissing of steam! The passengers in the 6.40 are saved, but in the midst of the smoking ruins of the Arrow lies the mangled body of the engine-driver's son.



Reaping the Whirlwind.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ By ALFRED LEWIS, A.R.C.A.

THE OPENING OF THE STORY.

DURING the marriage ceremony between Miss Adeliza Fane Capell, niece of a rich East Indian merchant, and the Hon. Kenneth Wilgorton, son of the late Viscount Clapham and of Lady Clapham, a slight disturbance is caused by two foreigners—a man and a woman—but no reason can be assigned for it.

On arriving at Mr. Fane Capell's house, the newly-made bride retires to her room. The next thing that is known is that she has disappeared, leaving a note for her husband, which says that she cannot live with him. No one had seen her go, but it transpires later that one of the foreigners who had been at the marriage was watching the house for a long time after the return of the couple. Could he have anything to do with the mystery?

Frederick Whinstone, Wilgorton's best man, starts to make some inquiries. He tracks down the two foreigners, and finds that they are a Madame Lenoir and her son, at whose school the missing bride was educated. They deny all knowledge of Mrs. Wilgorton, but outside their door Whinstone picks up a handkerchief bearing that lady's initials. He feels there is some deep mystery here, and returns at once to Wilgorton, who, as soon as he hears the story, starts off in hot haste.

Whinstone is engaged to Gertrude, daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, a couple with very decided religious views. While at their house he is arrested on suspicion of murdering Monsieur Lenoir, who has been found shot in a railway carriage.

CHAPTER VII:

The First Inquiry:

WHINSTONE lived with his father, Major Whinstone, in a small house in Kensington. His mother had been dead some years. The Whinstones were fairly well known in that particular circle of which Lady Clapham was a distinguished ornament; but as the Major had little beyond his pay as a retired officer, and led a very quiet life, they were not considered of great social importance. The son had chosen the medical profession. He had passed through the medical schools and hospital with credit, and was only awaiting a favourable opportunity to begin to practise:

Frederick Whinstone was at first utterly confounded by the extraordinary charge brought against him; but, as before intimated, rather on his friend's account than on his own. It was decidedly unpleasant, but he could not imagine for a moment that such a ridiculous charge could be sustained, and he quite hoped that the matter would be cleared up, so far as he himself personally was concerned, before his father even had time to hear of it.

The celerity with which ill news travels, however, has become a proverb, and the Major was informed of his son's arrest within a very short time of its taking place. To amazed incredulity succeeded indignant rage, and he hurried out to gain further

information: He jumped into a cab, and ordered the cabman to drive to the place where he had been told the police inquiry was being held. On the Exhibition Road he saw Colonel Brunell walking on the foot-path, and ordered the cabman to stop.

"What is the meaning of this, Brunell?" he burst out. "It was from your house, I hear. What does it mean?"

The Major was an irascible man; and he was now much agitated. He and the Colonel were never the best of friends. Their natures were too antagonistic:

"You mean your unhappy son's arrest," replied the Colonel. "Yes, alas! it was from our house. A very distressing thing for us all."

"I should think so. What does it mean?"

"Ah! there it is: We do not know what it means. We do not know why the cross is laid upon us; but we must bow to it."

"Hang the cross laid upon us! It is my boy I am thinking of: What is it for him?"

"Major Whinstone, I am bound to say—it is my duty to say—I am shocked at your way of speaking. Of course, you are in great trouble. I know that. I feel for you; I really do. That unfortunate and, I fear, misguided young man, your son—"

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Major Whinstone, I must protest—I really must. I am on my way to a missionary meeting for the conversion of the

Caribbean Islanders—a most interesting people lying in darkness. Your—I must say, intemperate language, which I have not consciously done anything to provoke, will disturb my mind. I must go now. I will send your son some books to read and meditate upon, if he is detained on this dreadful charge, which I earnestly hope and trust will not be the case.”

“How can he be detained? It is a piece of arrant tomfoolery altogether; and you are——” Perhaps fortunately the Major did not finish the sentence. “What in the name of Heaven and earth did they arrest him for?” he went on. “The fools! If it is anything to do with that Wilgorton affair, he only stood by his friend, as a man, who is a man, ought.”

“Oh, there must be circumstances which seemed to make the arrest necessary, however innocent he may be, and, no doubt, is. But, you see, I know nothing about it. It is a dreadful occurrence. The ways of Providence are, we know, mysterious—past finding out.”

“Do you think Providence has anything to do with this?”

“Oh, Major; you know what we are told. Not a sparrow——”

“Oh, yes, yes; but this is different. My son is arrested on a charge of murder. It is preposterous! Providence didn’t do that.”

“Who can tell? I admit we are all prone to think our own case different from any other.”

“What did Fred say? You were present when this ridiculous arrest took place.”

“Yes, alas! I was present. Your son was naturally—we were all naturally—agitated. He went away with the police-officer in a cab. He was taken, I believe, before the coroner, Mr. Streetham.”

“Oh!”

“Yes; Mr. Streetham—John Streetham. You know him. The court was sitting, or just about to sit. I am not sure which. We must pray for him. By the by, Major, it would be just as well if he did not attempt to communicate with my daughter while this dreadful charge is hanging over him. We all think so; and I am sure you will agree with us. Indeed, under the circumstances, it might be well if——”

“If what?”

“I was going to say—if the engagement were broken off.”

“What does your daughter say?”

“Oh, she, dear child, is a dutiful girl——”

“All I can say is, if she is willing to give

him up because of this infernally ridiculous accusation, which is, no doubt, already withdrawn—why, it must be—the sooner it is broken off the better. Rats forsake a sinking ship.”

“Really, Major, what a shocking comparison! But you don’t mean it. Good day, good day! I hoped you would see the reasonableness of what I said. I trust all will yet be well. God bless you!”

The Major muttered a far from polite rejoinder; indeed, he consigned his good friend to the companionship of a gentleman with whom the Colonel was supposed to be constantly at war. He re-entered his cab, and ere long arrived at the place where the inquest on the body of Monsieur Lenoir was held.

There, to his amazement and indignation, he learnt that Frederick, instead of being triumphantly acquitted, amid expressions of regret at the inconvenience to which he had been subjected, had been remanded for further inquiries. Bail was, however, allowed. The Major had some slight acquaintance with the coroner, who held out his hand to the distressed father, and expressed much concern at what had taken place. Under the circumstances, no other course was open to him but to remand young Whinstone.

When the question of bail was settled, father and son went away together. The circumstances of the case, as revealed at the examination, and now detailed by Frederick to his father, were as follows:—

About nine o’clock on the evening of the day when the marriage ceremony between Kenneth Wilgorton and Adeliza Fane Capell had taken place, a man, apparently a foreigner, had been found dead, shot through the head, in a first-class carriage of a train running between London and Richmond.

It was at Richmond that the ghastly discovery was made by one of the porters at the station. The discharged pistol lay on the floor of the compartment. The man did not appear to have been robbed. He wore two rings, a scarf pin, and a watch and chain; and some loose money was found in his pockets. An envelope, with the name Monsieur Victor Lenoir and the address in Farley Street written thereon, was also found; and this enabled the police to communicate with Madame Lenoir. The doctors called in did not think from the position of the body, and from other circumstances, that suicide was the cause of death:

Madame Lenoir identified the body as that of her son, and gave information which led to the arrest of Frederick Whinstone.

She gave an exaggerated account of Whinstone's two visits to the house in Farley Street, and went on to say that, after his second visit, she had watched him from her sitting-room window; had seen him loitering about near the house; that on her son, who was at home some time, going out, she had observed Whinstone stealthily follow him. She had thought to go, too, and warn her son; but by the time she reached the street they had both disappeared.

She was asked whether she had any reasons to suppose that a feeling of enmity existed between Frederick Whinstone and her son; and was obliged to say that so far as she knew neither she nor her son had ever seen the accused before the day when he came to their lodgings.

For what purpose had he visited them? His manner had been very peculiar. The servant had admitted him; but he had come upstairs unannounced and in the dark, and as an excuse, had said a great deal about a young lady who had been married that day, and was supposed to have disappeared from her home. The landlady of the house had been very suspicious of him, and had shut the door in his face the second time he came.

Madame Lenoir's evidence was given in a very excited manner—indeed, she was evidently unfit to give evidence at all, and certainly unfit to be cross-examined—but, such as it was, it was corroborated by the landlady, Mrs. Bagges, and by the servant, Emma Spry. The latter added that the second time she answered the door to Mr. Whinstone on the evening in question, he had said something she did not quite understand about a gentleman. Her mistress had interrupted him:

A porter from Baker Street station deposed to seeing Whinstone, whom he knew by sight, enter the same train—he could not swear to its being the same carriage in which the dead man had been found.

The pistol found was of English make. No other evidence was forthcoming.

Whinstone frankly acknowledged his two visits to the house where Monsieur and Madame Lenoir were staying; he had called to make an inquiry; but he declared that, although he had lingered about the neighbourhood a few minutes after his second visit, he had never seen the deceased. He

had traveled by the train in question as far as Kensington; but had been alone all the time in a first-class compartment.

A juryman asked whether his second call in Farley Street was in reference to the same inquiries which had occasioned his first visit. Whinstone hesitated a moment before answering this question—he had no wish to mention his friend, Wilgorton, at all—then he replied that it was in reference to the same matter. He had never in his life, so far as he knew, seen Monsieur Lenoir, and Madame only for a few minutes. He knew nothing about them.

Madame Lenoir, when confronted with Whinstone, appeared overwhelmed with grief, and her statement was so broken by sobs and wild lamentations, and so incoherent, as to be scarcely intelligible.

Whinstone wondered whether she would say anything about Adeliza. She did utter some wild words concerning Miss Capell's marriage; but nothing from which he could draw any certain conclusions. Indeed, she became so ill that she had to be removed from the court. This caused some interruption to the proceedings.

The evidence, of a purely circumstantial kind, did not seem of sufficient importance to warrant a committal. It seemed advisable to take a middle course, and remand Whinstone for further inquiries.

"Fred," exclaimed the Major, when the father and son were alone, "this is a con-founded business! Do you think it possible Wilgorton can have done it?"

"Father!"

"Oh, I know English gentlemen do not, as a rule, go about murdering people," the Major went on; "but from what I gather—from what you yourself have told me—he had some reason to suppose that this Lenoir had something to do with the disappearance of his wife. When a man is mad with rage and jealousy he doesn't know what he is doing. May he not have followed and shot him?"

The same thought was in the mind of Frederick; but he hesitated to acknowledge it in words.

"Wilgorton was always so level-headed," he began.

"Yes; but the most level-headed men may lose their balance under some circumstances. And if he imagined the fellow to have run away with his wife, which would mean something in the past, you see! Why, I would have done it myself. At any rate, I would have called him out, and made him

fight. Where is Wilgorton? He ought to have been there for your sake."

"He had not been home yesterday, and it was not known where he was."

"There! That looks bad. Fred, you must tell me all you know about him—everything. There must be no screening him at the expense of yourself."

"Father, I can't say anything which would lead to his being accused."

"My boy, that is right as far as it goes. But you must not be a Quixotic fool. Of course, you will be careful what you say about him; but you must also take care of yourself. If Wilgorton has done this thing, and he is a man, he will not let you suffer; but you must think of yourself. Hang it! you must. Come with me. We will go round to Lady Clapham's, and see whether anything has been heard of him."

Her ladyship was at home, and father and son were admitted. She was in a very irate and indignant state of mind indeed. If she felt any really great anxiety she carefully concealed it.

"This is a preposterous business, Lady Clapham!" the Major began.

"It is indeed, Major," she said, waving her white hands; but with some surprise in her voice. "Most preposterous! It makes one so absurdly ridiculous! The idea of a young woman in her position—I speak to you as a friend, you know—when I had given my consent to the wedding, and—er—sacrificed some of our prejudices, you know, on the altar of—of—well, affection—to run away! It is positively ridiculous, but disgusting! I never quite approved of Kenneth's infatuation—I can scarcely call it anything else; but young men are so absurdly headstrong. Still, the idea of—"

"Madam, I am thinking of Fred. You have enough to trouble you; but I am thinking of my son."

"What of your son? He is Kenneth's friend and all that—very nice and kind. You are indeed, Mr. Whinstone," turning to Fred.

"Madam, have you not heard? Fred is accused of murder—positively murder—that is ridiculous enough, in all truth—over this affair."

She evidently had not heard.

"Good Heavens, Major! What do you mean?"

She looked as though she thought he had lost his senses. She was soon, however, put in possession of the facts of the case.

"But it cannot be!" she gasped. "All this is absurd!"

"That is what I say, Lady Clapham; it is absurd!" said the Major. "But facts are facts. Fred is actually remanded on a charge of murdering this miserable Frenchman—a wretch he has never seen. Murdering him, madam! This Frenchman was in the church at the marriage of your son, it seems, and he and his mother, or both, behaved in a queer way. It was imagined, I hear, that he might have had something to do with the disappearance of your son's wife. I am sorry to mention such a thing; and I don't say it was so. It is incomprehensible to me. But Fred, in the interests of his friend, traced these people to their lodgings; and got himself accused of murder for his pains. Of course, all this must be cleared up. May I ask if Mr. Wilgorton is at home, or where he is?"

"He is not at home. I have not seen him since the day of the wedding. But, of course, he must be with his wife."

"You think so, Lady Clapham?"

"Where else should he be, Major? She could not have gone far—she could never really have intended to leave him; and I quite expect a letter with some sort of explanation, and asking to have his things sent on."

"I am almost afraid that you scarcely realise the seriousness of the situation," the Major said, directing a searching glance at her.

There was silence for a few seconds. Then Lady Clapham cried out:

"Why do you look like that, Major? You cannot think that Kenneth had anything to do with the death of this horrid Frenchman! That would be preposterous indeed—too cruel! I really think you might have spared me some of the remarks you have just made. I am bound to say I think they were in questionable taste."

"I am sorry to hurt your feelings. And, madam, I accuse no one. Your son is probably as innocent of this affair as a newborn babe. I know Fred is. In all likelihood it is some rascally foreigner who did it. Fred, why don't you speak? But Wilgorton seems to have had some provocation from the man; and he ought to come forward."

"He has probably not heard of this. He will come forward when he knows, I am sure," said Frederick. "It is a wretched business altogether."

"He went after that ridiculous girl!"

said Lady Clapham. "Good Heavens! what a frightful state of things! It all comes from breaking down the natural barriers between different grades of society—opening the flood-gates, as it were. Of course, things will adjust themselves in time; but in the meanwhile what is to be done?"

"Done, madam? One thing to be done is to set the law in motion on our own account. The real culprit must be found. For his friend's sake Fred was very reticent to-day; but it is, perhaps, a matter of life and death to him—at any rate of character and honour—and reticence must be thrown aside. We shall be very sorry if any disclosures painful to you and Mr. Wilgorton are brought about through our means; but, you see, we must speak."

"Oh, Major, this is dreadful! And to think that you say such things!"

"It is dreadful. But think of our condition. My son here accused of murder! Good Heavens!"

"But there is no evidence against him."

"Of course there isn't—no real evidence. I can't believe any grand jury would find a true bill against him. But for all that it is awkward. There are many fools in the world. We must do all we can to clear things up. Eh, Fred?"

"Certainly, father."

"We shall be compelled to state why you looked up those French people."

"Oh, this is too distressing!" exclaimed Lady Clapham, wringing her hands. "Of course, Kenneth will come. You know he will come, Mr. Whinstone," she went on, forcing herself to speak calmly. "No doubt, as you say, Major, it was some other unspeakable foreigner who killed this man—indeed, I am sure it was. I was to have had a dinner-party this evening; and this has quite upset me. It— Dear me, Geraldine, do you want anything? Go away a little while. We are talking business."

The latter words were addressed to her daughter, who with white face, wild eyes, and disheveled hair, had glided into the room. The girl, without taking any notice of her mother, went up to the Major, with whom she was a great favourite, and laying her thin hand on his, said:

"Where is Kenneth?"

"Ah, Miss Geraldine, we want to know that," he replied.

"It was a strange wedding," the girl went on; "and I have had fearful dreams

about it. Oh, Major Whinstone, I have seen blood! There is blood between Ken and Adeliza!"

She shivered violently.

"Geraldine, my love, you must not give way to such fancies," said her mother. "It is awful for me, dear! It is perfectly horrid! You should think of that. Major, she has not been herself at all lately. I can't make her out. How can such things be? Why is it? She must have been allowing some foolish servant to talk to her. Geraldine, you give me the horrors! Go away, dear! You positively must!"

"Why doesn't Kenneth come home if he is not with Adeliza?"

"My child, how do you know he is not with Adeliza?"

"I know they ought to be together; but she went away without telling him. I thought the Major or Mr. Whinstone might know something of him. Why did Adeliza go away? She loved Ken. I made her tell me one day. And I can tell. Then, why go away? Oh, there is something dreadful! I know there is! And you all look horrified!"

"Geraldine, it is you who horrify us. You don't understand things. Come with me. The Major and Mr. Whinstone will excuse us."

She led the girl from the room; and a few minutes later the father and son left the house.

* * *

CHAPTER VIII.

The Colonel's Intimates.

THERE are, it is said, people who actually enjoy their own troubles—who are never—to use a familiar paradox—happy unless they are miserable; but it is the discussion of the misfortunes of others which gives the keenest enjoyment.

The Wilgortons, the Capells, and the Brunells all had a large circle of friends, or, at any rate, acquaintances—people who were not more ill-natured than the rest of the world; but who sat down, as it were, at once to a thorough enjoyment of the present situation; who called upon each other, invited each other to dinner, who drank afternoon tea together, all for the sake of having pleasant chats over the extraordinary and dreadful events which had lately happened to their dear friends.

In the case of the Brunells there had not been time for any of these pleasant reunions;

but rumours, more or less vague, of what had taken place at their house in the morning had in an incredibly short space of time been circulated amongst their friends.

Mrs. Brunell was "at home," and her drawing-room was thronged by a greater number of callers than usual, all eager to hear fuller particulars than they had yet been able to learn. The majority of the callers were, as was to be expected in such a house, what are termed "serious people," and the conversation usually consisted largely of reports and discussions of some religious or philanthropic matter; but to-day these questions failed to evoke the accustomed interest.

Conversation languished somewhat from time to time; the visitors looked at each other; and more than one lady put out a cautious feeler in an endeavour to lead the talk round to the subject uppermost in all their minds. But Mrs. Brunell, who was really much distressed at what had happened, as well as much perplexed, carefully ignored, so long as she could, all such suggestions, and tried to confine the talk to the ordinary topics.

She regretted that this happened to be her "day," Gertrude was not present. Agatha flitted about from one visitor to another, eager to impart all she knew, but restrained by the strict injunctions which had been laid upon her to "bridle her tongue."

"And so the dear Colonel has gone to Exeter Hall? How good of him under the circumstances! But he is so good! 'Spend and be spent,' is his motto," said a tall and elderly lady, who had already made more than one ineffectual attempt to introduce the subject of Whinstone's arrest. "And your sweet daughter Gertrude—how is she?"

"Gertrude has a headache."

"Ah, sweet thing! So sorry! But no wonder, under the circumstances."

The tall lady sighed deeply, and the sigh, in varying degrees of depth, was echoed by the other visitors. Mrs. Brunell was a sensible woman. She quite understood that there was some justification for the curiosity of her friends, and she felt that however reluctant she might be to discuss it with them, it was impossible to further hold her peace concerning the subject to which they so pointedly alluded.

"You have heard, I find, dear Miss Huntwell," she said. "It must, of course, be some frightful mistake; but knowing Mr. Whinstone as we do, and it happening as it

did, we are, as you may suppose, very much upset."

"Certainly; you must be. It is too awful! And we sympathise with you. You know we do, dear, most thoroughly—don't you?" was the answer.

"Distressing indeed! How did it happen? Do tell us, dear Mrs. Brunell. So very shocking!" cried a chorus of voices.

"And such a relief to one's mind to talk to one's friends," added Miss Huntwell.

Thus adjured, Mrs. Brunell gave a brief account of what had taken place.

"You told me I mustn't say anything about it, mother," said Agatha, in an injured tone. "Gertrude is in a fine way. She declares he didn't do it."

"Of course she does, Agatha. We all say so," replied her mother. "No doubt this frightful mistake will soon be rectified," she continued, addressing her visitors; "but in the meantime it is very distressing."

"Of course it is—of course it is," again came the chorus of voices.

"We must make it a subject of prayer, of self-examination, and even of thankfulness," remarked a fat, unctuous-looking gentleman, raising his eyes, and slowly rubbing his hands.

"Of thankfulness, Mr. Blewitt?" echoed Mrs. Brunell.

"Yes, dear Mrs. Brunell. Of thankfulness because we ourselves are—providentially—exempt from such dreadful crimes, and because, appalling as the circumstances are, you have faith to believe that your friend will emerge from his fiery trial unscathed, so to speak."

"Oh, yes, I see, Mr. Blewitt."

"It is perfectly ghastly, I think," observed Miss Huntwell. "And so dear Gertrude believes in him? Sweet girl!"

"In Mr. Whinstone? I hope we all believe in him at present. To suppose him anything but innocent of such a thing would be too dreadful, and too absurd," said Mrs. Brunell, flushing a little.

"So good of you! And how does the dear Colonel bear up? So shocking for him, dear man! You told us he had gone to Exeter Hall; and I know he would never let purely worldly and personal matters interfere with duty."

"I repeat, he is much upset—you see, we have known Mr. Whinstone some time—but my husband has faith to believe that the truth will soon be made known; and, of course, that the truth will be favourable to Mr. Whinstone."

"Just so—just so. Faith is a glorious possession," said Mr. Blewitt. "We must make it a subject of prayer."

He seemed about to suit the action to the word, which made some of the ladies put down their tea-cups, and caused Agatha to pull a wry face behind his back; but he simply picked up his handkerchief, which had fallen to the floor.

"Had the man who is supposed to have been murdered really anything to do with Miss Fane Capell?" inquired another lady. "I have actually heard so; indeed, things are said that one can't repeat. It is very strange. It seems positive that some foreign people interrupted the ceremony, and that Miss Capell—or I ought, perhaps, to say Mrs. Wilgorton—disappeared immediately afterwards. If there is a—connection, it must concern Mr. Wilgorton more than young Whinstone, I should say."

"There is more in it than meets the eye," said the second gentleman. "There will be some interesting and, it is to be feared, shocking disclosures, you may depend."

"I seldom read the newspapers—they contain such improper things. A dear friend of mine—but she belongs to the exclusives—the Brethren, you know—feels this so strongly that she has never seen a newspaper for seven years."

"I think we ought to—well—learn all we can in a case like this where we know the people. It is really a lesson, you know, if we look at it in the right light," said Miss Huntwell.

"Certainly; or how can we make it a subject—" began the unctuous one.

"It is a positive duty," continued Miss Huntwell, ignoring the interposition. "I did not quite like to mention it myself, but I think Mrs. Long Jones is right in suggesting the possibility of some connection between this supposed murder and the extraordinary conduct of Miss—the Honourable Mrs. Wilgorton. You know I was in the church."

These words were said in a tone which caused a delightful thrill of horrified expectancy to pass through each individual present; and all instinctively drew their chairs closer to the speaker. The lady smiled sadly, sighed, and shook her head with becoming gravity. She was, nevertheless, beginning to enjoy herself immensely.

"Yes, I was in the church," she went on; "and if ever a bride looked like a living corpse Miss Capell did."

"Did she? Did she? Dear me! And did you see the people who caused the disturbance?" came from various parts of the room.

"No; they were on the other side of the building. But Archdeacon Bulmer, who was conducting the service, stopped; and Lady Clapham positively glared. Some people may not have thought much of it; but you could have knocked me down with a feather."

"And do you think—?"

"Agatha, dear, go upstairs and see how your sister is," interrupted Mrs. Brunell. But the young lady, who at that moment appeared to be very much engaged with a Persian kitten, apparently did not hear.

"I cannot help thinking a great deal," said Miss Huntwell. "We live in strange times—times to make one shudder in one's bed. What will the day bring forth? I often ask myself—I do, indeed! Lady Clapham is secretly overwhelmed, you may depend, although she pretends she is not. She is trying to make out that it was only some girlish whim which made the bride act as she did; and that the newly-married pair are together again now. She is actually going to have a dinner-party this evening, I hear."

"You don't say so! But that's bravado."

"Ah! and if the worst should come, how will she bear it—not having, as we have too much reason to believe, that grace which enables weak humanity to sustain trial? Ah! what do people not lose by persistently hardening their hearts and stiffening their necks! And, say what she may, everybody knows she was so anxious for that marriage. The idea of giving a dinner-party! It is indecent, really!"

"It must have been arranged before these unhappy circumstances took place," said Mrs. Brunell.

"Yes; but why not countermand the invitations? I would not go to her dinner-party at such a time; no, not if she asked me on her bended knees. What with her half-imbecile daughter, her son's curious wedding, his wife running away, and now this murder, all mixed up, it's awful!"

"It would be interesting to go, if only out of curiosity," remarked the gentleman who had spoken about the shocking disclosures.

Miss Huntwell looked unutterable things.

"I am afraid the golden calf, so to speak,

has a great deal to do with many Society marriages, and we cannot altogether wonder that things we hear of happen," she said. "Lady Clapham, with all her pride, is as poor as a church mouse; and this marriage is a great thing for her. My maid is a sort of cousin or something to her woman, and she says she has had to go without her wages many a time months after they were due. I never, of course, talk to servants, or listen to their tattle; but my maid is loquacious, and such a faithful creature, that I allow her to talk a little at times; and I am really sorry for her cousin, poor woman! And faithfulness is so rare in servants nowadays."

There was a faint smile on the faces of some of those present as Miss Huntwell spoke of the relations between her maid and herself. She had for the moment forgotten how often she changed these "faithful creatures," and how recently the many shortcomings of the one particularly referred to had been a fruitful source of conversation with her.

"The unregenerate heart is hardened," put in Mr. Blewitt; but whether in allusion to Lady Clapham, or to the servant-maid class, was uncertain. "We must, indeed, make it a subject of meditation."

"How do the Capells take all this?" asked Mrs. Long Jones.

"My dear, how can they take it?" returned Miss Huntwell. "I think the less said about them by Christian people—at least about the girl—the better. A young woman who would go to church to be married—a thing some of us have never done, and would hesitate a long time before we did—and then run away with another, she——"

Instead of finishing her sentence, the lady sniffed vigorously.

"Did she do that? Is that so? Dear me!" came from the hearers.

"Well, it is said so; but there are so many reports about," answered Miss Huntwell, perhaps sorry that in her eagerness to astonish she had gone so far. "People will talk."

"The Capells are, no doubt, very worldly people; but, for all that, I think they are greatly to be pitied," observed another lady, in a tone which seemed to infer that where worldliness did not exist such pity was not necessary. "And Major Whinstone, too—we all know what he is—and so proud of his son—what will he do?"

"Why should people be proud? Such a

mistake to set one's heart upon any idol of clay," said Mr. Blewitt. "It is certainly yet another subject for private meditation."

"This appears to be a profitable afternoon for you, Blewitt," said another gentleman.

"Oh, Mr. Blewitt, there is surely some excuse for pride which springs from parental affection," said Mrs. Brunell. "We are deeply sorry for Major Whinstone."

"Ah, you are so good, dear Mrs. Brunell—you and the Colonel!" cried Miss Huntwell.

"I heard that young Wilgorton had not been seen since the wedding—that no one knew where he was," someone remarked. "They say he is raging mad—madder than a March hare."

"Will they crop young Whinstone's hair in prison?" asked a lady, to whom the last observation appeared to have suggested a curious association of ideas. "I hear they do such things."

"My dear Mrs. Horniblow!" remonstrated Mrs. Brunell.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Brunell. I had quite forgotten that he was so intimate here. I am so sorry!"

"He wears it pretty short at present. Will he have to live on bread and water, mother?" asked Agatha.

"Agatha, you must not ask such questions. I know nothing about such things. Did I not tell you to go upstairs to your sister? Go at once!"

With evident reluctance, the young lady slowly left the room.

"Poor dear Gertrude! So sad for her!" said Miss Huntwell. "Such a stigma must attach to a young man who has been in prison, however innocent he may be. And as an intimate friend she must feel it."

"Just so, just so," chimed in once more the unctuous gentleman. "I do so trust we shall all make it——"

"Ah, here is Colonel Brunell!" interrupted Miss Huntwell, who liked to hear herself speak better than anyone else. "How do you do, Colonel, after this trying day? How do you do, Mr. Pike? I do hope you have had a happy meeting."

The Colonel had entered the room, accompanied by a somewhat flabby-looking individual, dressed in riding costume. This individual was well on in middle life; he had a bald head, but he endeavoured to conceal the fact by allowing his warty side locks to grow very long, and combing them carefully over the shining upper surface of his cranium, which gave his head a striped appearance.

He had small, weak eyes with a cast in them; and a large mouth filled with teeth too good to have grown there. His nose was a rather insignificant feature; but there were indications in his face of dogged stubbornness, if not of actual strength of will. In figure he was of medium height, and inclined to corpulence. He greeted Mrs. Brunell and the other persons present, with whom he was acquainted, with a kind of solemn cordiality.

A few minutes later all the callers had departed except Mr. Pike. Miss Huntwell, be it remarked, took leave of him with a considerable amount of respectful *empressement*. When they were all gone, Mr. Pike continued to sit by Mrs. Brunell, with his hands crossed meekly over his waistcoat, and conversed with her in low tones:

"The Colonel has been telling me about the shocking event of this morning; indeed, I fear it is now public property. Nothing can be hidden nowadays. A bird of the air will carry the matter."

Mrs. Brunell did not immediately reply, and Mr. Pike went on:

"Such a thing happening here was dreadful: I never heard of such a thing. The young man, I must say, ought not to have let it occur in this house. It was very inconsiderate. You have my deepest sympathy. How is your dear daughter, Miss Gertrude? I hope this did not greatly upset her. I hear she was present when the officer came: Mr. Whinstone certainly ought not to have come here to be—er—arrested. It was very thoughtless. I never heard of such a thing in all my life."

"It is indeed unpleasant; but Mr. Whinstone could not have imagined that such a thing was about to happen when he came here this morning. It must be a frightful mistake, which will soon be cleared up, no doubt," said Mrs. Brunell.

"We must hope so. But these things, you see—ah!—there is usually something, don't you know? How is Miss Gertrude?"

"Naturally upset. You see, we have known Mr. Whinstone a long time."

"Mr. Pike will stay to dinner, dear," said the Colonel. "Where is Gertrude?"

"In her room. She will be down presently."

"Gerty has a letter from Mr. Whinstone," said Agatha, entering at that moment. "Green was taking it upstairs, and I made her let me look at it. I know the writing on the envelope. Do they let them write letters?"

"Whom do you mean by they? Be quiet, child!" commanded the Colonel.

A frown contracted his usually serene countenance. He said something to his wife in an undertone, and she, with an apology to Mr. Pike, left the room. She made her way to her elder daughter's chamber. Gertrude was lying back in a chair, her face pale and anxious. She held an open letter in her hand.

"Gertrude, dear, Agatha tells me you have had a letter from Mr. Whinstone. She recognised the handwriting. What does he say?"

The girl made no answer.

"What does he say, dear?"

"He has gone home."

"Then this—this matter is cleared up?"

"No!" exclaimed Gertrude, with a sudden burst of tears. "He is what is called remanded—out on bail. Oh, mother! mother! why should this happen to him?"

Mrs. Brunell allowed her to sob unrestrainedly for a few seconds. She put her arm round her.

"My love, you must not give way like this. You really must not. It is really not becoming. I know you feel it. We are all dreadfully sorry, of course!"

The convulsive sobs continued.

"Gertrude, listen to me. I want to know what you are going to do. You say he is remanded, and, therefore, suspicion is not removed from him. Now, listen to me with patience. You are not going to answer this note?"

"Why not?" asked the weeping girl, surprised into some sort of calmness. "He needs all the help and comfort his friends can give him. I should like to see him; but he says he will not call while this charge is hanging over him."

"Very right and proper, dear."

"But—"

"My dear, your father would rather you did not hold any communication with him at present. You see, it is such a dreadful thing; and your father is so peculiarly situated."

"Mother, I do not quite understand."

"You must surely see how very unpleasant this is for your father—for all of us. We do not for a moment suspect Mr. Whinstone to be guilty; but he must, we think, have been indiscreet in some way or other, or this awful charge would never have been made. At any rate, it is better to remain quite quiet while the

proceedings are pending. Fred—Mr. Whinstone himself evidently recognises this. I should not like my daughter to be talked about; and you know something of what the world is. I hoped the matter would not have gone even as far as a remand."

"Mother!" cried Gertrude indignantly, "you surprise me. We know he is innocent: It is even utterly absurd to mention it. We know that when he went to see these people it was from a generous desire to help his friend. The action was creditable to him. Whoever may have killed this man, Fred knew nothing about it. He never saw him. And had he seen him a thousand times, and had he done him personally all sorts of wrongs, he would not have killed him. Never since the world began was there anything so ridiculous as this charge!"

"No, no; but——"

"We ought to stand by him," continued the girl excitedly, and without paying any heed to the attempted interruption. "We ought to show the world that we believe in him. Christianity, honour, common sense, common human feeling, all demand it. Why, Mr. Wilgorton was much more likely to have killed the man than Fred: That stands to reason."

"My dear, you must not say such things," urged Mrs. Brunell soothingly. She was not a strong woman, and when at a loss for an argument with her children, usually fell back upon the saying "You must not say such things." "You are excited," she went on, "and do not quite see that you are in a way accusing your parents of a lack of Christianity, and the other things you mention. It is not nice of you. We simply want you to be prudent. As for what Mr. Wilgorton might or might not have done, we know nothing. You see Mr. Whinstone is charged, and Mr. Wilgorton is not. I daresay neither of them is in the least guilty. But this does not make it any more desirable that you should see or write to Mr. Whinstone at present. Such is your father's opinion, and you ought to give him credit for knowing and doing what is best. Let him send a little note in answer to the one you have received."

But Gertrude would by no means consent to this. She was a dutiful daughter; but her feelings were now thoroughly aroused, and she knew enough of her father's idiosyncrasies to feel sure that the contents of a letter from him to her lover would be rather of a nature to irritate than console the young

man, even if no hint were given of canceling the engagement between herself and him:

Besides, what girl cares to delegate the answering of a lover's letter to another? And, certainly, she now considered it more than ever due to Fred to answer it herself.

Whinstone's was a brief note, simply informing her that he had been remanded for three days on bail, expressing deep regret for the shock the arrest must have caused her and her parents, and declaring his conviction that before the three days had elapsed the charge against him would be withdrawn.

There were no protestations of innocence; he did not ask her to have faith in him. He took it for granted that she already fully believed in his innocence, and that, therefore, any appeal to her faith in him would be quite unnecessary. She saw this, and intended to show him that his confidence was not misplaced.

The arrest was a ghastly and unpleasant farce altogether; but one of its worst consequences might be that her parents' lukewarm consent to her engagement would be changed into active opposition.

Fred was not a favourite with Colonel Brunell; and he did not consider him a desirable suitor for his daughter's hand. It has already been stated that the Colonel thought him a worldling. He did not belong to that strict sect of which the Colonel was a shining light, and he had unwisely shown on more than one occasion a sort of good-humoured contempt for the opinions of some of the pious persons who frequented the Colonel's house—in by no means so marked a fashion, be it said, as was sometimes evinced by his own sons. But they were his sons, while Whinstone only wished to be one.

Then Whinstone was at present poor, and the gallant Colonel, perhaps without exactly knowing it, honoured riches, especially when joined to godliness, or what he esteemed godliness; and a much more wealthy as well as a more pious suitor was not at all an impossibility.

Mrs. Brunell secretly liked Whinstone: It was impossible for her to dislike him; and his "worldliness" did not militate against him to such a degree with her as with the Colonel; but she did not consider him a suitable match for Gertrude in other ways—particularly his lack of fortune. She was not a very worldly woman; but she argued, as mothers will, rightly or wrongly,

that her daughter was not fit to be the wife of a poor man.

The Colonel had yielded to importunity, and given a conditional consent to the visits of Whinstone to his house as an engaged lover; but from the first he would not have been sorry to find a pretext for breaking off the connection.

Finding Gertrude evidently resolved not to delegate the answering of Whinstone's letter to her father, Mrs. Brunell changed the subject, and expressed a hope that her daughter would not confine herself to her own room any longer, but would come downstairs to dinner. It would vex her father very much if she did not join the family circle. He had already been asking for her. Gertrude consented to go down to dinner. Her mother omitted to inform her that Mr. Pike would be their guest that evening.

On her way downstairs Gertrude encountered her brother Robert, a long-legged, fair-haired giant, much given to athletic exercises and games of various sorts. Ill-natured people said he did nothing but play with a ball all the year round; football, hockey, golf, cricket, and tennis in their respective seasons. Billiards always. He had tried two or three professions, but settled to none.

"Gert," he said, "have they been on to you about Fred? It's an infernal shame! It's like hitting a man when he's down. I am going to see him to-night. Can I take a message for you?"

"Oh, Bob, tell him to keep up! It is sure to come right. It must! Don't you think it must, Bob? I am going to write to him."

"Of course it will come right. How else should it come? Yes; I'll tell him. I say, Gert, that blooming Johnnie, Pike, is downstairs. What an old owl he is!"

* * *

CHAPTER IX.

"Two Persons to See You, My Lady!"

LADY CLAPHAM was very much disturbed in her mind—never had she been in such a state of agitation before. This was but natural; for never before had such amazing and dreadful circumstances occurred in all her experience.

Her heart sank within her as she recalled to remembrance her last interview with her son. An irresistible desire to say something

disagreeable, which, curiously enough, does take possession of certain persons at times, and which in this case was born of her own irritated feelings, had partly actuated the remarks she had made to Kenneth concerning a connection between Adeliza's flight and the foreign stranger in the church; and now she thought with horror of the expression of his face, and of the way in which he had left the house.

He had been more than half-distracted when he came to her, and she had made matters worse. Had he taken a pistol with him? With a sinking heart, she went to his study, where she knew there were usually two, and to her horrified dismay, found that one pistol was gone.

She did not believe for a moment that Whinstone had anything to do with shooting the Frenchman. That would, doubtless, soon be proved. She hardly dared, even to herself, give form to the dreadful thought which followed.

She told herself over and over again that this murder was simply one of those vulgar crimes which are, unfortunately, so common, and that she need have no uneasiness on that head. But, then, when it became known that Whinstone, in his officiousness, had called at the murdered man's lodgings to inquire for her son's missing wife, what talk there would be! and what more likely than that suspicion would fall upon Kenneth? Public opinion would soon find, in a not unnatural jealousy and desire for revenge, sufficient motives for the deed.

Even if he could prove himself guiltless—and when she remembered his pale, desperate face, and the deadly weapon which it seemed he had carried with him on that fatal evening—she learnt this for certain from a servant—she had a dreadful fear at her heart that he would not be able to do this—the whole thing was frightful in the extreme. His absence from home, she knew not where, would make matters worse.

She had declared her conviction—and had done her best to persuade herself of its truth—that Kenneth was now with his wife, and that very soon a letter would be received by her announcing the fact. She was a woman who, as a rule, could, without much difficulty, persuade herself that what she wished to believe was true; but her interview with Major and Mr. Whinstone had aroused deadly fears and done much to put to flight such confidence as she had.

Then there was the dinner-party fixed for

that very evening. It was too late to postpone it now. Notices of such postponement ought to have been sent out, at the very latest, that morning; but a desire to show the world—her world—that she was not affected by what had happened, that she considered Adeliza's conduct to be merely the result of a girlish whim, to quote Miss Huntwell's words, to put a bold face on the matter, had prevented her from doing so. Besides, she had doubtless believed that the wandering bride would have been brought back ere then, and all scandal hushed up.

Now the banquet was, to all intents and purposes, quite ready; the servants were putting the finishing touches to the tables; she could hear the pastry-cook's men in the hall below; and in little more than two hours her guests would be at the door. Impossible now to ask them not to come; indeed, such a course would be to betray her fears.

The Capells and the Whinstones would not be present; but others would. She must brace herself up for the occasion; she must strive to hope for the best; at least, she must hide her anxieties, she must ignore all unpleasant subjects, and trust to the guests' good breeding to do the same.

Lady Clapham had a brother a few years younger than herself. He was an impecunious baronet, a bachelor, and occupied chambers in the Albany. He seldom assisted at his sister's little dinner-parties and other social functions. He posed as somewhat of a woman hater, and he designated those ladies who were to be met at Lady Clapham's house as "old tabs."

Rumour, however, said that he was not quite such a misogynist as he professed to be; but that those ladies whose society he preferred were not exactly such as could be counted amongst his sister's friends.

Sir Julius Hoby had been out of town for a few days—really to avoid what he called "the fuss" of his nephew's wedding, although that was not exactly the reason given for his absence. He had now returned, and, indeed, had been prevailed upon, Kenneth presumably being absent on his wedding tour, to take his place at the dinner-party that evening.

In her desire to unburden her mind to somebody, for the weight upon it seemed intolerable, Lady Clapham decided to see her brother before the dinner. There would be no opportunity to speak to him alone then, and it was not likely that he would arrive before the hour fixed. There

was not much time to spare, and she sent a servant at once to the neighbouring livery stables for a carriage, and drove to the Albany—a place she had never visited before.

The porter at the Albany stared at her ladyship, and her brother's servant gravely assured her that Sir Julius was not at home. Lady Clapham, however, knew her brother too well, and was also, of course, too conversant with the polite fictions of Society, to take this for granted. She, therefore, gave her name, and insisted upon entering.

She thought her brother looked a little confused when she entered his presence; she also imagined she heard the rustle of silk. But she was too full of her own errand to pay much attention to anything else. Sir Julius Hoby, wearing a shabby smoking-jacket, was standing in front of the fire. Cigars, decanters, and glasses were on the table, and the fumes of wine and spirits mingled with the aroma of tobacco. He was a rather handsome man, about forty years old, with a face upon which self-indulgence had left its traces. He was now slightly flushed, and looked anything but pleased.

"What the deuce—I beg your pardon, Sabina—what brings you here? I was coming round presently."

"Yes, yes. Have you heard anything?"

"I have heard about that fool of a girl, if that is what you mean. Who hasn't? What has Ken been up to?"

"Julius, are we quite safe from interruption?—and are you sure we shall not be overheard? I have something to say of the greatest importance to us all. And I have very little time—I have no time."

"Then, leave it. Won't it do this evening? I'll come round to your place directly. I am busy myself just now."

"You look like it. No, it will not do this evening. I have come on purpose, and you may be sure I should not come here on business which was not important. I must talk to you. You can't have heard: Are you sure we shall not be overheard?"

"Confound——" he began. Then, seeing the real concern in her face, he turned the key in the door, and drew a heavy curtain over it.

"Now, if you will talk, fire away. We are safe enough. I suppose it is about Ken and that girl. What——"

Lady Clapham interrupted him, and in a low, agitated voice, but as concisely as she could, told him what had happened:

He had only returned to town that afternoon, and had not heard of the supposed murder, or of the arrest of Whinstone. Of the strange termination to his nephew's wedding he had heard.

"It is absolutely dreadful!" concluded Lady Clapham, waving, and then clasping, her hands. "There is no telling what people will say. If Kenneth would but write or come home. I have been declaring that he is with Adeliza now—the idiot could not really have intended to leave him, unless there is something behind it all—something too terrible to think about. But don't you think it is time he wrote? This dinner-party, too. It can't be put off. You must help me to carry that through."

"All right, Sabina. You are a brave woman. As the dinner isn't put off, we must do the best we can, and show no uneasiness. It looks like a bad case, though."

"Oh, Julius!"

"Now, don't give way. But, whatever may come out, that girl Capell is either a fool or a hussy, or both. Really, Sabina, women are usually——"

"I have not come to listen to your opinions upon women in general, Julius, profound as they doubtless are. I want help."

"That's right, Sabina. You are yourself again now. I will help you all I can. How do you know Ken took his pistol with him that day?"

"I found that one was missing from the study; and Binns told me it was taken away then. Geraldine saw Kenneth with it, she told me, too."

"Oh!"

There was a silence:

"You say the extraordinary change took place in Adeliza from the moment somebody called out in the church. I understand it was a woman who made the row. Did Ken himself connect it with this Frenchman, or did someone suggest the idea to him?"

"You see, Julius, Adeliza was at school in France, and this man was a Frenchman," was the somewhat faltering and evasive reply of Lady Clapham. "Then some of the Capells' servants declared that they saw the man outside the house, apparently watching, and that he followed her when she went away. So I understand."

Again there was a short silence.

"If Ken suspected this French fellow of any tricks, he should have given him a good horse-whipping," the Baronet remarked presently. "He was a mad fool, if—— It is infernally awkward for us all."

"You don't think he killed him!" almost shrieked Lady Clapham, anxious to have her own dread fears contradicted.

"It is an awkward business. I don't know what to think. We can only await the development of affairs. If he did it, he was mad with rage and jealousy. Of course, the man may have killed himself. Doctors don't always know. Or he may have been shot by somebody totally unconnected with Ken. The circumstances look bad. Ken rushing out to find the man, and taking a pistol with him is not reassuring. By the by, how many people know of this?"

"The Whinstones know, and I expect the Capells know, too."

"And Geraldine knows, and Binns knows, and, I daresay, plenty of other people. The Whinstones will do all they can to shift suspicion off young Fred—naturally enough."

"Oh! what shall we do? You put things in such a hard light."

"Remember, Sabina, you know nothing about it."

"The pistol? Oh, no; but the others?"

"Yes; that's the worst of it. Geraldine you can manage; but the others, especially the Whinstones——"

"Oh! Good Heavens!"

"Where on earth can the girl be?"

"Heaven knows! The wretch!"

"You say you have been declaring she is with Ken. Stick to that at present. Go home now. Keep as quiet as you can. We can do nothing, you know, and we must seem to suspect nothing. You are well able to put a bold front on things. You have arranged this dinner, and it can't be put off. Be just as usual. Things may turn out better than they look. I'll do my best. By the by, I wish you could lend me a ten-pound note."

"Oh! Good Heavens! The idea of asking such a thing! I believe if the crack of doom had come you would try to borrow money! Come early."

The Baronet's request for a loan was a not unusual one to his intimate friends, and did not necessarily argue that he was in any way indifferent to his sister's troubles, which, indeed, affected him also; nor did it infer that he imagined her to be so softened and

overcome by her anxieties as to grant what he asked. It rather indicated that he was in a very agitated and confused state of mind, if he really thought she would listen to his request—a request which force of habit would have allowed him to make under most circumstances, however serious, if not upon the appalling occasion referred to by his sister.

Lady Clapham had risen to depart; but she sank back again in a chair with something like a groan.

"I wish, Julius, you would be reasonable. I don't often give way; but Geraldine worries me to death. Now she is constantly talking about this wretched marriage of Kenneth's; and she says things enough to make one's blood run cold. She says she has seen visions—blood!—actually!—and I don't know what. I am used to her vagaries; but now she really frightens me. What am I to do?"

"The girl is excited and hysterical. Don't be anxious. Her brain is all right. It is only brooding over silly fancies which makes her what she is. Be cautious to-night, and keep Geraldine quiet. I hope everything will come right. It may—who knows? It is not like you to show the white feather. I will ring for my man to open the door for you."

"Thanks. I am not going to show the white feather, as you call it. You want me gone; and it is time I was gone. How I shall get dressed in time I don't know. Come as soon as you can."

* * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Capell had been invited to Lady Clapham's dinner-party; not that her ladyship regarded them exactly as friends, or that she had any particular wish to further cultivate their acquaintance; but, as the banquet was given in honour of her son's wedding, it seemed necessary to include them in the invitations, a point, moreover, on which Kenneth would have insisted even if his mother had demurred.

They, however, in their present state of doubt and anxiety, had deemed it only right to send excuses for non-attendance. Indeed, they never imagined that the party would now be held, and had only sent excuses because they wished to be particularly punctilious towards Lady Clapham.

It is one of the penalties of persons in the viscountess' position that they often have to—or fancy they have to—entertain and to lavish honied words and courteous looks upon people for whose society they have no liking

whatever. Amongst the expected guests was a certain lady whom Lady Clapham at heart cordially detested, and whose sharp tongue even she, well able usually to hold her own, dreaded. This lady, a Mrs. Vanclure, was also a widow, and had an only son—a tall, insipid-looking young man, with a face the profile of which suggested a triangle, the apex being the tip of his nose. In manners he was a bored, world-weary young man.

There had been a keen, although unspoken, rivalry between the two ladies as to which should first secure a wealthy bride for her unmarried son. Lady Clapham had won in the race, although it was true that her son's marriage had been brought about without any agency of hers. Kenneth Wilgorton had married an heiress, while Mrs. Vanclure was apparently as far from the attainment of her object as ever.

This would have been a source of triumph to the viscountess had all gone well. But what a marriage had it turned out to be! Some amount of humiliation certain, and the possibility of something infinitely worse than humiliation, so threatening.

Matters having turned out as they had, Lady Clapham would rather have met anyone than Mrs. Vanclure. But there was no help for it. The invitation had been sent, and under the circumstances Mrs. Vanclure would be sure to come.

Mrs. Vanclure was not magnanimous. She was considered well-bred; but like many well-bred people, so-called, could be rude when she felt inclined; and she was not likely to spare her dear friend, Lady Clapham, in the remarks she was sure to make on the *contretemps*—the flight of the wealthy bride from the very altar, as it were—which had occurred. It was possible that as yet she knew nothing of the much more serious development which threatened.

The ladies usually met with a considerable show of affection on both sides. The less they were in agreement—the more bitter the one felt against the other—the more affectionate they were. On this occasion Mrs. Vanclure was particularly effusive, a fact Lady Clapham noted, while mingled with her loving solicitude was a galling touch of pity.

In addition to the Vanclores, Archdeacon and Lady Charlotte Bulmer, with some half dozen other guests, were present. There had been a serious discussion between the reverend dignitary—who, it will be remembered, had performed the much-talked-of marriage ceremony—and his wife as to the

propriety of their sanctioning with their presence a dinner-party given under such extraordinary circumstances. The Arch-deacon had seen objections; but his wife had overruled them.

Dear Lady Clapham certainly knew what she was doing; she was one of the last persons in the world to commit a solecism; the fact that the party was given at all proved that the disquieting and shocking rumours afloat were without foundation, and in how much better a condition they themselves would be to contradict these rumours if they attended this function.

Ladies can usually find a reason for it if they wish to do a thing. The Arch-deacon's bland face was a little graver, and Lady Charlotte's manner towards Lady Clapham more fussy and affectionate than usual. The other guests watched their hostess somewhat narrowly, and from time to time exchanged meaning glances with each other.

The dinner went off as well as could be expected. Sir Julius, who had obeyed his sister's injunction to come early, exerted himself to make everything run smoothly, and to prevent any embarrassment a knowledge of recent events might have caused. And yet it was impossible to prevent embarrassment.

A dinner-party in honour of a wedding, and that wedding the one subject which, by almost universal consent, was avoided! This fact was of itself sufficient to indicate the presence of a skeleton at the feast. One absent-minded gentleman did say something about "the happy pair," and Sir Julius, compelled to reply, made some light remark; but most of the guests maintained a significant silence. Lady Clapham's face was serene and smiling, but that outward serenity and those smiles cost her a mighty effort.

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room, Mrs. Vanchure, who could contain herself no longer, sat down by Lady Clapham's side, and leant tenderly and confidentially towards her.

"How brave you are, dear Sabina!" They had known each other as girls, and when very affectionate, which often meant very cutting, they called each other by their Christian names. "I do admire and really envy you, although I am so sorry. You remind me of the what-do-you-call-them of old?—the Spartans; or something. You

do, indeed. The Spartan boy and the rabbit, don't you know—was it a rabbit?—or was it a vulture, perpetually gnawing his—what-do-you-call-it?—and all that. To receive us all in such a delightful manner, while such dreadful things are being said. You do quite right to show your scorn for such ridiculous reports; but few of us are so brave; and if I had done for dear Cecil what you have done for Kenneth, and then all this had turned up, I should have died—I know I should."

Lady Clapham looked thoughtful. She could not tell how much Mrs. Vanchure had really heard. Before she could make any reply the butler entered the room, and came towards her with such an air of mystery that her attention was at once attracted.

"What is it, Binns?" she asked sharply.

"If you please, my lady, two persons wish to see you on particular business."

"Two persons?"

"Yes, my lady. It's very particular, they say."

"I cannot see them. Who are they?"

"If you please, my lady, may I speak to you?"

Binns was an elderly and grave personage, and his manner funereal. Report said that his mistress retained his services, although he was getting a little beyond the efficient performance of his duties, because "she had him cheap."

Something in his present manner startled Lady Clapham; there appeared to be real alarm in his face; and with a sinking heart she made some excuse to her guests and left the room.

"What is it?" she demanded, as soon as she and the servant were outside.

"Oh, my lady, I didn't know what to do, whether to come to you, or to go to Sir Julius. But I thought I had better come to you, my lady. And the persons said they must see you."

"The persons? Who are they?"

"Oh, madam, there are two men downstairs, and——"

"And what, man? Speak!"

"They are officers of the perlice!"

Lady Clapham turned deadly pale.

"Police! What do they want? Speak!"

The man still hesitated; but with an imperious gesture, she again ordered him to speak.

"They say they want Mr. Kenneth, my lady!"

(Another long and exciting instalment of this story will appear next month.)

An Original Idea.

BY THE EDITOR.

I have decided to try an experiment in THE NOVEL MAGAZINE which will, I am sure, be popular both with my would-be contributors and also with my readers.

I propose to publish every month one or more stories by contributors who have never before had a story published in any paper or magazine.

The selected stories will be paid for and published in the pages of THE NOVEL, and to each of them will be appended a short criticism of the story, which will be helpful to the author should he or she determine to continue writing, and at the same time, should prove of interest to the reader.

My object in doing this is not to encourage every rash youth and maiden to rush into literature, but because I firmly believe in giving writers a first chance, provided their stories are of merit, and give promise of further development. I do not, of course, propose to tire my readers' patience by printing rubbish; but I quite hope to find treasure-trove among the "great unpublished," and there is no reason at all why a first story should not be a gem, even though its author has never had a manuscript accepted, or perhaps even essayed to write at all.

Every story submitted must be accompanied by a guarantee from the author that he or she has never had this, or any other story, published before. Stories should be from 1000 to 4000 words in length, typed if possible, and written with a view to the general requirements of THE NOVEL, or any other good popular magazine. They should be sent in envelopes marked "First Story," in the top left-hand corner.

I do not bind myself to publish any of the stories sent in, but I expect to select at least one or two—perhaps more—every month for publication. They will be read by my staff of readers, like the ordinary stories sent in, and will be judged by myself.

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Hundreds of readers have sent in attempts to finish the story entitled "The Conventional Ending," for the best conclusion to which I offered a prize.

The result will be found on page 527. On the whole I am very pleased with the endings submitted, and have had difficulty in awarding the prize. As you will see, I increased the amount of money offered in order to meet the exigencies of the case.

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Several letters have reached me lately saying that the writers of them have found this Editorial Page of great use to them as would-be contributors. That is just what I want it to be, and I am gratified to hear that such is the case.

New Chum's Luck. * * *

By AMBROSE PRATT.

Being the romantic history of a proverb of the Australian goldfields.

THE mining village of Horseshoe Gully was, on the afternoon of May 4th, 1879, a date thereafter celebrated in the annals of the place, perturbed by two extraordinary occurrences. John Carmichael had unearthed from his claim a nugget weighing almost sixty ounces, the largest discovered since the diggings had been proclaimed a goldfield; and scarcely had the shock of feverish public excitement consequent upon the young digger's splendid luck even partially subsided, before the assembled miners (the entire population of the Gully had congregated on the verandah of the Golden Gleam Hotel to discuss the great event) were obliged to reflect upon another nerve-distracting phenomenon.

Nancy Dysart, the one unmarried female inhabitant of the Gully, the pretty daughter of Robert Dysart, landlord of the "Golden Gleam," and object of adoration of all the bachelor miners in the district, was observed approaching the hotel shanty, escorted by a person whose appearance and equipment created among the spectators an emotion of astonishment akin to consternation.

This person was a tall, clean-shaven young man, whose frank, good-humoured face was not remarkably intelligent, though not particularly stupid. He carried in one hand a small, silver-mounted dressing-case, in the other a hold-all which enfolded a gold-topped malacca cane, a gold-headed umbrella, and a neatly rolled-up waterproof coat.

He wore an elegantly cut Norfolk jacket and a pair of tweed knickerbocker trousers, while his shapely and substantial legs were incased in rough, woollen stockings. His boots were a bright yellow, his white straw hat was encompassed with a scarlet band that matched his necktie, and a monocle was firmly screwed over his right eye.

As he approached, one half of Horseshoe Gully stared in dumb amazement at his monocle; the other and younger portion gazed morosely at his stockinged legs, which they regarded as an outrage upon propriety. The young men noted with jealous indignation

that Nancy Dysart was chatting to her escort without apparent recognition of his immodestly attired understandings. They could hardly believe their eyes; she had always seemed such a modest girl!

John Carmichael, who had twice asked Nancy to marry him, was the first to break the fascinated silence. He pushed through the crowd until he stood upon the edge of the verandah, and there, pausing, he ejaculated: "I'll-be-blowed!"

Horseshoe Gully heaved a sigh of relief. The sentiments agitating its bosom had been feelingly expressed.

Nancy Dysart and the stranger had by that time come within easy range of Carmichael's voice. The girl blushed rosily; the young man dropped his monocle in surprise, but, quickly restoring it to its place, he looked at Carmichael with an expression of mild interrogation.

"Did you speak to me?" he inquired politely.

Carmichael disdainfully waved his hand, and addressed the girl.

"Where did you pick it up?" he demanded grimly.

"On the Tamworth Road," replied Nancy, with a propitiating smile.

"It!" observed the stranger, and then: "*Bai Gad!*"

Horseshoe Gully broke out into a wild shout of spontaneous merriment. The stranger's gesture and accent appealed irresistibly to its sense of humour.

The stranger dropped his bundles on the path and coloured hotly. He looked angry and rather foolish.

"It's blushing like a girl," said someone in the background.

"Look at its white hands," cried another:

"Its hair is curly," gasped a third.

Horseshoe Gully was not of an inventive mind. Having once appreciated and grasped a ludicrous idea, it usually worried the thing to death before troubling to seek another.

"Look out! It's getting angry!" cried a fourth.

"Garn! *it's* lost *its* mammy, *it's* going to cry!" bleated a fifth.

It must be recorded, however, regretfully, that Nancy Dysart not only smiled at these outbursts of bucolic wit, but, perceiving that the stranger was hostilely regarded by the miners, she edged away from him until finally he confronted his adversaries alone. Her father, however, appeared soon after she had vanished, and it may be charitably assumed that she had deserted her companion for that purpose.

Mr. Dysart came upon the scene as the stranger, doubling his fists, was delivering an intemperate but intelligible challenge to Horseshoe Gully anent fisticuffs, a challenge which would not have lacked acceptors. But the landlord was a large and peaceably inclined man. He placed a ponderous hand on Carmichael's shoulder as the lucky digger was about to "square up" to the stranger.

"Hold on, Jack!" he commanded, "I'll have no fighting here."

Carmichael, submissive to the interference of his innamorata's father, fell back, saying: "All right, Bob. It wouldn't have been fightin' though—chicken slaughter!"

Horseshoe Gully screamed with laughter. When its mirth had subsided, Mr. Dysart addressed the stranger:

"Hallo you!"

"Good-day," replied the stranger, anger struggling with civility in his voice and looks.

"What's yer name?"

"Morton Cholmondeley."

Horseshoe Gully expanded in a guffaw.

"Where d'yer come from?"

"Sydney. I have walked here from Newcastle."

"Blooming liar!" commented the Gully *sotto voce*.

"In them duds?" asked Mr. Dysart, with a backward smirking glance at the crowd.

Mr. Cholmondeley bit his lip, and choked out "Yes."

The Gully again exploded.

"English, aren't yer?" proceeded the inquisitor.

Mr. Cholmondeley nodded.

"Come to try your luck gold minin', I s'pose?"

"I have, sir," replied the young man, and then with unexpected dignity he demanded: "And now that I have answered your questions, perhaps you will condescend to explain the reason of my extraordinary reception here. You appear to have some acquaintance with these boors" (he waved

his hand)—"I should like to know if they behave to all strangers as they have to me?"

The speech had the effect of a bombshell. The "boors" glanced at each other and repeated the word with strong exclamatory additions.

Mr. Dysart, in evident confusion, mumbled some excuse, but, observing the excited disposition of the miners, he cut this short and retorted:

"All very fine, Mr. New Chum, but we don't have handbox dandies come here every day. I've seen your sort before, though these boys haven't, but, curse me, if you're not a sight to make a cow laugh!"

Jack Carmichael walked up to Mr. Cholmondeley. "Boor meant me, didn't it?" he asked.

"I confess that the expression seems to fit you," replied the stranger.

The lucky digger's response was a blow that laid Mr. Cholmondeley prostrate.

During the fight that ensued, the crowd, disregarding all principles of fair play, assisted their champion whenever an opportunity occurred, and it is probable that the Englishman was indebted for the subsequent soundness of his limbs to Miss Nancy Dysart's interference. That young lady, observing him recumbent on the ground, and helplessly receiving the booted attentions of at least a dozen vigorous miners, promptly rushed to his assistance and dispersed his brutal assailants with a few vehement and stinging words.

She made a very pretty picture as she championed the fallen man, her lips parted, her eyes blazing with scorn, and a burning spot of crimson in either of her cheeks. Cholmondeley picked himself up, disheveled, bruised, and bleeding, but his eyeglass was still in place, and he used it less to regard his adversaries than to admire his protector.

"Confoundedly pretty girl!" he muttered, quite loud enough for her to hear; and then, taking out his handkerchief, he coolly proceeded to flick the dust from his boots and clothes.

Miss Dysart presently seized his arm, and, having exhausted her indignation with a contemptuous "Cowards!" addressed impartially to Horseshoe Gully, led the young man within the shanty.

The miners, sullen and discomfited, did not linger, but retired shamefacedly by twos and threes to their tents and claims and cabins. Jack Carmichael was the last to leave. He said to Mr. Dysart:

"She called me a coward, but I didn't

ask the coves to help me. I could have laid him out myself. By Heaven, if he fools round Nance, I'll stiffen him!"

Mr. Dysart picked up Mr. Cholmondeley's silver-mounted dressing-case and hold-all. The silver, and the gold mounts of the cane and umbrella, appealed to his landlord's soul. He already repented of his own behaviour, fearing it should have lost him a profitable guest.

"Shut up, Jack," he said sternly. "Don't you talk of stiffening the cove; he may stiffen you yet, and anyway he's blacked your eye a treat, he has!"

Mr. Dysart's prediction was partially fulfilled, and within a fortnight. During that time, Morton Cholmondeley, who had been christened "New Chum" by the entire Gully, resided at the "Golden Gleam" and passed his time looking about him with intent to peg out and work a claim eventually on his own.

The young man's disposition was not in the least malicious, and in spite of his stockings and his monocle, he was presently taken to heart by a respectable proportion of the population. His manners were courteous and affable to all, and he showed himself always ready to "shout" drinks for any miner who manifested an inclination to imbibe.

Moreover, he displayed a constant thirst for information, and he listened to the marvelous stories which were "spun" him with a spontaneous credulity that absolutely endeared him to the yarners, and as all the world knows, most gold miners are yarners. He became presently the butt of the Gully, but he did not appear to realise the position. No one laughed louder than he when the laugh went against him, and he accepted the attentions paid him with innocent and fervent gratitude.

The Gully soon decided that he was a fool, but a good-tempered and harmless fool, and they treated him as ancient kings used to treat their jesters—with a sort of contemptuous kindness.

John Carmichael, however, observed that Mr. Cholmondeley spent a great deal of his leisure in the society of Nancy Dysart, and the fact inflamed his jealousy and sealed his hate. He took Nancy privately to task for her coquettish conduct, but only earned a flouting for his pains. He thereupon vowed vengeance and openly boasted his intention to drive New Chum from the diggings.

On the tenth day of Mr. Cholmondeley's

stay at the Gully, a waggish old miner, named Earnshaw, solemnly advised the New Chum to peg out a claim on the brow of a rocky hill immediately overlooking the rich alluvial river flats that constituted the goldfield proper, every foot of which had long since been taken up.

To the delight and amid the loud chuckles of the population, Mr. Cholmondeley gratefully accepted Earnshaw's counsel and laboriously pegged out a claim, which he forthwith proceeded to work. From the geological nature and position of this claim it was patent to the intelligence of any experienced person that New Chum's labour would be employed in vain, but in all Horse-shoe Gully there was no one kind enough to do anything but laugh, except Nancy Dysart, and to her warnings Morton Cholmondeley refused to listen.

He was overheard by the Gully Peeping Tom to say to her: "My dear girl, what does it matter? One place is as good as another. I have to buy my experience, and as well on the hill top as on the flat; let us drop the subject. Believe me, there is not a claim on the diggings I would not barter if I owned it for one kiss from your pretty lips!" Which speech proved that New Chum, although a foolish miner, knew something about wooing; and that his intentions to Nancy Dysart were serious no one doubted from the first.

The conversation was duly reported, perhaps with embellishments, to Jack Carmichael, whose patience thereupon gave way. On the following morning he visited New Chum's claim, alone, but prepared for battle. Mr. Cholmondeley was discovered on his hands and knees at the bottom of a hole which his energy had already scooped out to a depth of some eight feet.

Carmichael jumped rather hastily to the conclusion that his rival was attempting to hide in order to escape a beating. Mr. Cholmondeley's attitude was certainly suspicious.

"Come out of your hole, sneak!" commanded the aggressor.

New Chum looked up, plainly startled. "Eh, what?" he cried.

"Come out, yer coward, none of yer skulking there like a rabbit in a burrow! I said I'd give yer a beltin', and I'm goin' ter do it."

"I beg your pardon?" cried the surprised Englishman.

Carmichael interpreted the expression as an apology. "None o' yer apologies 'll go down with me!" he growled. "I've stood

yer bulldozin' my gal long enough. You've got to quit Horseshoe Gully or stand a bel'tin' for every day yer stays here. Come on, out yer git!"

The New Chum scrambled out of the hole without reply, but once on his feet, he quietly remarked: "There is a piece of level ground over there!" and led the way to it. Some moments later, the miners on the flat, who were constrained to watch the fight from a distance, were astonished to perceive Carmichael fall before a vigorous left-hander and lie where he had fallen.

Mr. Cholmondeley subsequently assisted his badly beaten opponent down the hillside, and helped him to wash his broken nose in the nearest sluice race. Jack Carmichael was, however, anything but grateful.

As the miners collected, he viciously explained his defeat. "He must have hit me with a ring!" he cried.

Mr. Cholmondeley for answer displayed hands which were bloodstained, but guiltless of jewellery.

"It must have been a stone, then!" growled Carmichael. "Anyway, he's a coward. I found him skulking on his hands and knees at the bottom of his hole."

The Englishman coloured, then laughed. He replied unconcernedly: "I was on my hands and knees, but I wasn't hiding. The fact is" (he looked around him with a pardonable air of triumph) "I have discovered a quartz reef, and I think it is a rich one. I wish some of you fellows would come up and look at it."

"A reef!" gasped the miners. Some laughed loudly, all were incredulous, but the word had a magical effect. Horseshoe Gully with one accord dropped its tools, abandoned its wash-pans and cradles, and followed Mr. Cholmondeley to his claim. Even Jack Carmichael, forgetting his broken nose and degraded dignity, joined the clamorous and hilarious procession.

Soon the fact was established beyond all doubt—New Chum had unearthed a substantial and well-defined reef several feet wide, carrying good, free gold at the rate of at least six ounces to the ton.

Work was forthwith temporarily abandoned by the entire population, and the miners with one exception gathered about the "Golden Gleam," to drink beer at the expense of Mr. Cholmondeley and to toast an event which was calculated to have a great effect upon the fortunes of the district.

The exception was Jack Carmichael. The defeated pugilist, however, was not

missed amid the general rejoicing. Mr. Earnshaw was the only unhappy member of the assembly at the "Golden Gleam." He was not only obliged to accept the grateful but misplaced thanks which, like coals of fire, the New Chum showered upon his head, but to endure the rude quips and jeers of the other miners on the extraordinary termination of his practical joke. He consoled himself by getting drunk, and retiring into a corner whence presently he could be heard repeating in a monotonous singsong: "My — luck! I give him the reef, chucked away a fortune. My luck!" A little later he began to weep bitterly, and finally he fell asleep.

Meanwhile, his brother miners, having drunk their fill (the process occupied more than an hour), began to realise and whisper to each other that they might have a finger in Mr. Cholmondeley's pie. Jake Sievers, the oldest inhabitant, broached the subject publicly.

"Boys," he shouted, "speech!"

Someone pounded a glass upon the bar counter, and silence fell.

"Boys!" said Sievers, "there's going to be a rush to these diggings and mighty soon, I'm thinkin'. In a week there'll be hundreds here."

The miners stared at each other, nodding solemnly.

"A wink's as good as a nod to a blind horse," said Sievers; "for my part, my old wash claim can go to pot. I'm goin' to peg out on the line of reef."

He made a dart for the door, passed out, and Horseshoe Gully followed him pell-mell.

Mr. Cholmondeley gazed after his vanishing guests—stupefied with astonishment, but Mr. Dysart clapped him on the shoulder.

"Don't stand there gaping like a looney, sonny! Take my advice and get back to your claim; someone may jump it!"

"Jump it! What does that mean?" asked the young man.

"Snatch it from you. According to the law—s'posing you haven't pegged it right, for instance, the first comer can do yer in, and you'd have no redress. You look out for Jack Carmichael, he has a grudge agin yer!"

Mr. Cholmondeley waited for no more, but set off like a deer. He found the hill alive with men who were pegging out claims in all directions. But Jack Carmichael had been before them all. He had already repegged Mr. Cholmondeley's claim, and he sat upon a mould of earth overlooking

the precious reef, a pipe in his mouth, a shot-gun across his knees.

When the young Englishman arrived, panting and enraged, upon the hill top, Carmichael warned him to keep off, and, emphasising the warning with the gun, thus addressed him :

"We're quits now, my cock! You gave me a lambasting, and I've jumped your claim. This reef is mine, and many thanks to you for finding it. You pegged out for an alluvial claim, and I've pegged for a quartz one. I have the law of you, and if you attempt to molest me and don't clear off my property at once, I'll drill a hole through you!"

"You infernal scoundrel!" cried the Englishman.

Carmichael only laughed, and his laugh was echoed by a dozen in the vicinity.

"It's robbery—robbery!" gasped the poor New Chum, in a strangled voice.

"Garn!" sneered the jumper. "Fa i exchange is no robbery; you can have my old claim if you like!"

To the music of inhuman sniggers and tittering assurance of sympathy from the bystanders, Mr. Cholmondeley choked back his rage, and, swinging on his heel, returned to the "Golden Gleam," in order to take counsel with his landlord.

But Mr. Dysart had no comfort to give him. "He has done you in, sonny," he said, not unkindly, though he laughed as he said it. "He has the law on his side, and you can't touch him. Grin and bear it is your motto. The best thing you can do is to take him at his word and collar his old claim."

But this advice sent the poor young man stumbling to his room, blinded with tears of rage and mortification, and Nancy Dysart, on going to him some hours later, found him in a condition bordering on despair.

"I'm done, Nanny," he groaned. "I spent nearly all my money treating those boors this afternoon, the brutes laughed at me afterwards, and now I haven't five pounds left in the world."

"Never mind, dear," said the girl.

The Horseshoe Gully Peeping Tom afterwards assured his cronies that she smiled "divinely"—he had a poetic soul—and then put her arms round the New Chum's neck and kissed him on the lips. However that may be, Nancy Dysart gave Jack Carmichael the cut direct that very evening, and on the next morning Morton Cholmondeley was observed pegging out another quartz

claim, under the canny direction of Martin Earnshaw, on a ridge in a direction immediately opposite the hill on which he had previously discovered the reef.

Ill-luck, however, still pursued the unfortunate young man. Within a week a rush set in to the diggings from the surrounding districts, and, before long, one of the newcomers discovered that New Chum had ignorantly neglected to provide himself with a miner's right. His second claim was incontinently jumped, and once more he was turned adrift. His condition was now desperate and rendered almost unbearable by the reports of Jack Carmichael's daily successes, and the fact that the reef was almost immediately picked up by the party who had jumped his second claim.

However, he soon showed that he possessed true grit, though perhaps a little of the credit of his conduct may be assigned to Nancy Dysart, who unswervingly befriended him. Having spent his last shilling, he left, *by request*, the Golden Gleam Hotel, and built for his future residence a small bark hut upon the now deserted alluvial flat. He sold his silver-mounted dressing-case and gold-topped cane and umbrella to a friendly digger, and with the proceeds, instructed by adversity, he purchased a miner's right and pegged out under expert guidance the alluvial claim that had been contemptuously abandoned by his rival—Jack Carmichael.

Miss Dysart was a frequent visitor at his solitary encampment, and history relates that she preserved her lover from starvation with victuals privily abstracted from her stony-hearted parent's stores.

It is probable, however, that history has been led astray by its inherent and inevitable inclination to romance; for it has been established that Mr. Sievers gave Mr. Cholmondeley thirty shillings for his dressing-case, cane, and umbrella. Now, a miner's right at that time cost a sovereign, and with ten shillings the New Chum might easily have withstood starvation for a week, within which period he had already begun to derive a fair income from his toil. This by the way.

For five months Mr. Cholmondeley worked early and late, apparently undisturbed by the fact that Jack Carmichael had established a mill and battery upon his meanly acquired claim, and was looked upon by the whole field as a budding Midas. No doubt the young Englishman often writhed in secret on hearing of his rival's triumphs, though he must have drawn some consolation from

his own successful love affair, for Nancy Dysart had, despite her father, who supported the suit of Carmichael, publicly announced her engagement to the New Chum. By that time Horseshoe Gully had become a populous and thriving town. Hundreds of reefs, great and small, had been discovered on the hills around, and the whole district was dotted with prospectors' huts.

The river flats were, however, abandoned to Mr. Cholmondeley, and a tribe of Chinese dirt washers were his only neighbours. He took presently some half-bred Kanakas into his service and prospered by their aid so well that, at the end of six months' work, he bought a steam pump and began to delve beneath the river bed, following a small lead of rotten reef which it is believed the Kanakas had discovered.

His operations beneath the river bed are clouded with mystery, though every inhabitant, past and present, of Horseshoe Gully, is at all times willing to render his or her own account of the proceedings. All, however, that is definitely known upon the matter is, that one night (there had been previously some heavy rain upon the mountains) the river flooded its banks and put a term for all time to work upon Mr. Cholmondeley's claim, by the simple device of shifting its bed and cutting a new course across the flat.

The New Chum and his Kanakas, warned by the rising waters, made their escape in good time and presented themselves soon after dusk at the police station, staggering under bags which appeared intolerably heavy. They gave the bags, sealed, into the hands of the police, and departed to return again more weightily encumbered than before.

The floating population of Horseshoe Gully, on the completion of their third trip, became curious and impertinent, but Mr. Cholmondeley disdained to reply to their inquiries. Several historians concur in relating that Jack Carmichael, who was present, attempted to involve the New Chum in a quarrel, relying perhaps on the assistance of his sycophantic followers, but his efforts were discounted by his enemy's coolness and forbearance.

His business completed at the police station, Mr. Cholmondeley walked over to the Golden Gleam Hotel and passed before the door whose threshold he had not crossed since his ignominious expulsion. He called for Miss Dysart in a loud voice, and on her

arrival muttered some words in her ears which seemed to occasion that young lady the greatest possible surprise.

Mr. Dysart then appeared at the door, and, urged perhaps by Carmichael, he angrily commanded his daughter to withdraw into the house. Whereupon Mr. Cholmondeley protested. "Excuse me, Mr. Dysart, but when addressing my wife again, be good enough to use more seemly language."

"Your wife!" shouted Dysart and Carmichael in a breath.

The New Chum nodded. "We have been married for the past three weeks. The last time that Father Ryan called here he married us."

It is stated by reliable witnesses that at this moment Mr. Cholmondeley slipped an arm round Nancy's waist and that the young lady neglected to reprove him.

"You — dog!" shouted Carmichael, overcome with rage and jealousy.

"You needn't think I'm goin' to keep a miserable pauper for Nancy's sake!" growled Dysart, who was equally angry.

"Thank you!" retorted Mr. Cholmondeley, bowing courteously to his father-in-law. "The Hon. Mrs. Cholmondeley's husband is not a pauper, sir. During the last four days I have taken sixteen thousand pounds' worth of gold from my claim, and the gold is now in the keeping of the police yonder!"

The chagrin of Mr. Carmichael, from whose old claim this surprising fortune had been extracted, and the dismay of Mr. Dysart, who realised too late that he had unforgivably insulted a wealthy man and his son-in-law, may be better imagined than described.

That night the principal inhabitants were permitted to examine and even curiously handle the treasure—under police supervision. On the following morning Mr. and Mrs. Cholmondeley departed from the town in a spring cart with their gold, accompanied by a strong mounted escort—their destination the distant metropolis and England.

No one in Horseshoe Gully ever heard from the New Chum again—but to this day the situation of the reef he first discovered (which, after all, proved of no great value to the knave who jumped it, for within a year it petered out) and also that of the alluvial claim from which, with such happy poetic justice, he won his fortune, are pointed out by the inhabitants to the casual stranger, as "New Chum's Mine" and "New Chum's Luck," and this is their veracious history.

*The Record of a * * * ** *Window Pane.*

By MARY KOCH. * * * * *

A legend of an old Lincolnshire Manor House.

DEEP in the Fen country of Lincolnshire lies an old Manor House, over the door of which are carved in stone the crest and initial letters of a certain John Crayton.

This old house has many interesting tales to tell, but perhaps the most interesting is connected with one of the windows belonging to a bedroom at the side which looks over the orchard, where, written with a diamond on one of the tiny, square panes are two names; first a man's in bold, plain characters, and underneath, in delicate Italian tracing, a woman's, with the date 1653. Both names are inclosed in a heart.

There is a record kept of this little love tracery, for it hangs together with an episode of our English Revolution—a small, unimportant adventure, but not without interest. It concerns a pretty little Royalist maiden who had married a grave young Puritan, and had spent her bridal time under the roof of his staid, quiet parents—John and Priscilla Crayton.

It had been rather a shock to the old people when they heard that their only child was going to bring them a daughter from a house which had fought on the other side in the bitter struggle barely over.

"A giddy, godless young thing, most likely," the serious-minded, sombre-clad Lord of the Manor remarked to his prim wife, with her smooth hair and sad-coloured gown.

"Aye, aye, to be sure," she returned, "fond of dress and fallals, curling her hair, which the Lord made straight, and such sinful ways, I ween, instead of setting her affections on the Better Country, and keeping her feet on the road to Zion. It is a terrible thing for our son, John, whom we have so carefully trained for better things."

"Temptation of the Devil, I reckon," the old man sighed. "but there, there, we have promised to give her a welcome, and as she is so very young, we may hope to redeem her to a better life; our John will soon change her ways and lead her in the paths in which she should go."

They spent only their bridal week at the Manor, I was told when I visited the place, and heard the story which I am now retelling. And there rose up in my mind's eye the gay little bride, with her Puritan spouse, as she stood in the funny, low-ceiled bed-chamber with its queer, fourpost bed. I fancied her looking out of the windows across the green landscape to the distant sea beyond, for in those days there were no houses to hide the view as now.

Were her bright eyes ever dim during that honeymoon period? Perhaps they had clouded over when she had found that she was required to hide all her pretty little ringlets under a tight-fitting cap, and that the dainty frill of lace which trimmed her short-waisted gown, and fell so prettily over her neck, had to be taken off and a simple fold of cambric put in its place.

No doubt her sweet lips pouted when John told her, with quiet firmness, though with some reluctance, that her brooch and feathered fan must be laid aside, together with the string of pearls she used to wind round her shapely head.

"I like your little ears better without rings in them, my Nancy," said he tenderly. "God made them pink and white, why put a blue or red stone in them?"

Nancy was one day in the little square bedroom looking out of the window, perhaps contemplating the names which her husband had but recently engraved in a heart on one of the panes, when she was startled by a stone coming right against the casement. She cried out in alarm, but instantly checked

herself, and turned white with fear, clutching at the latch for support.

In the orchard below, peering from behind a tree, she saw the figure of her brother, who had been engaged in some plot to restore the royal Charles to his rights.

She had hoped he was safe in France, and his presence in the orchard made her shake with apprehension. His liberty, and perhaps his life, would be forfeited if he were caught.

On perceiving that he was recognised, he beckoned her to come down and follow him to a safer rendezvous further off.

This Nancy did, with a beating heart and in great fear of being observed.

"Quick, quick!" murmured her brother as soon as she came within hearing, and hardly waiting to greet her: "Quick, Nance, I am pursued, and must hide for my life. You must hide me somewhere in the house until nightfall. A boat will then come to shore for me, and I can secretly get away to join the Prince, who is, thank God, safe. No time is to be lost! I cannot give you any more explanation now. Quick, quick, or it will be too late!"

"But," hesitated Nancy, trembling all over, "how can I hide you? What can I do? We shall surely be seen. Oh, Roland, how incautious of you to venture here! You know my husband and his family are dead against you, and if they saw you here they would give you up to your enemies. Why come here?"

"Just because none will seek me here: You are still on our side at heart, little one, and must help me. Just because your husband is a Puritan, you can help me best: Quick, tell me where I can hide in the house yonder? None will dream of seeking for me there. They will go to the inn and rout the cellars and lofts: They may scout out every cottage and barn in the place, but will never think of looking in John Crayton's Manor House. But quick, little Nance, do not linger here, or I am lost."

Nancy looked in dismay at the wild, torn appearance of the young man before her, whose disheveled locks and mire-bespashed boots told of a hasty ride. Where he had left his horse, or why he had been obliged to throw himself on her assistance, she could not divine, and there was no time for explanation.

She looked round for one brief moment at the bright, sunlit landscape, the orchard trees and hazel bushes among which they stood, then across the glass plot at the house

with its red roof and high chimneys. Despair was on her face. How get over the open space? How get unseen into the house with a strange man, and when there, how hide him, and where?

Suddenly there flashed into her mind the recollection of a deep lumber closet let into the wall of her bedroom, the door of which was papered over. She had only become cognisant of its existence the day before by observing the key in the lock, and had opened it out of mere curiosity to find a big, musty inclosure in the thickness of the wall.

If her brother could reach this closet she might conceal him there for a time until the shades of night should befriend his exit. The thought of her stern husband and still sterner father-in-law made her hesitate, however, and caused her to try one more effort in another direction.

"Roland," said she, putting her red lips close to his ear, "could you not hide among these bushes? They belong to the Manor grounds, and none will look for you here any more than they will in the house."

"No, no," said the young man. "The risk is too great. Shame on you, sister! Are you already such a turncoat that you refuse to befriend your only brother?"

"But we shall be seen, and all will be lost," returned Nancy in a tearful voice: "How will you venture in broad daylight over that open piece of ground?"

"Can you hide me if I get over that difficulty?" urged he eagerly:

"Yes, yes," said she, "I think I can."

"Then you go straight across as if nothing had happened, walk boldly into the house through the back door, and await me there: When the way through the passage and stair is clear you must begin to sing a little song as to yourself, which shall prove a sign to me: I will meanwhile glide from bush to bush, from shadow to shadow, round by the thickset hedge yonder near the kitchen garden, then under the red wall by the bushy elder, where I can wait for your signal: Should I be seen I am lost, but I shall run for it, and you will be free from suspicion: Go, haste thee away! Be brave, and act as usual, or you will betray me."

Nancy did as she was bid: Catching up her dainty skirts, she stepped with her neat little feet in their square-toed, buckled shoes through the somewhat high grass.

She tried to look unconscious, and fortunately no one was there to see her, nor

to observe her looks, or we cannot tell what might have happened; for I doubt if she could have played the heroine. All the accounts of her point to the contrary.

Fortune, however, favoured her, and the fugitive got into the house and up the stairs unobserved. It was the lazy hour after noon, and no one was on the alert. Roland was safely locked in the closet, while the heavy key weighed down Nancy's pocket until nightfall.

But they were anxious hours, for "How to get him out?" kept recurring again and again to her mind, and she nearly attracted attention by her absent-mindedness.

She sat in the prim parlour with her mother-in-law at needlework, answering in monosyllables, and living in anticipation through the dangerous venture that was before her.

Roland had confided to her that at midnight a boat would come alongside the landing jetty, and that, should he succeed in getting to the seashore in safety, his escape would be made.

The soldiers would search for him all over the village through the afternoon, but would probably cease before midnight, so Nancy concluded. The greatest difficulty was how she could get him out of the cupboard when her husband was in bed, there being no other exit from the closet but through their bedroom.

As the hours went on, Nancy's nervous fears increased, and were greatly added to when John came home full of the search that was being made in the village.

"It is your unlucky brother, Nancy," he said, "and for your sake, sweetheart, I can but hope that he will evade the search, though should he be discovered it will, I trust, help to reclaim him. Poor, misguided young man! But the Lord's will be done."

Old John Crayton was less merciful, and brought his fist down heavily on the table at supper time when the news was discussed. Nancy sat trembling with fear. She could not touch her food, but this was considered due to her natural anxiety about her brother.

Her mind was somewhat relieved when later a villager came into the Manor kitchen with the news that the searchers had left the neighbourhood, and had taken their party off to the next town along the coast, where there seemed more facility for the fugitive crossing the water.

John was a heavy sleeper, and his regular breathing was most assuring to the anxious heart of his wife, who lay by his side quaking with fear and apprehension, and counting the lagging moments as they were ticked off by the timepiece on the wall.

To her horror her husband's breathing seemed to be echoed by a similar sound from the recesses of the closet.

Could it be possible that Roland was asleep? He had always been a light-hearted, careless young fellow, but she could hardly credit that he could sleep at such a moment. Nevertheless it was true, and the awful thought that she would have to wake him, for midnight was at hand, filled her soul with dismay. Rousing him would rouse her husband, and all would be lost.

Sick with fear, she heard the hour of twelve chime out, and knew that if she lingered the boatman would cease to wait for Roland, taking his non-appearance as a sign that he had failed in his endeavour to escape.

Glancing with terror at the tranquil figure of the unsuspecting John, Nancy rose stealthily, and with bated breath turned the key in the cupboard, to behold in the dim light the form of her luckless brother crouching on the floor fast asleep.

Poor, trembling little Nancy, what was she to do? Would stern John ever forgive her if he woke at that moment? How rouse her brother without some noise?

She shivered even on that warm Summer night, and almost mechanically slipped her little bare feet into the satin shoes by the bedside. The lamp lighted up her white-clad figure and her terrified face that was framed in a neatly-frilled, closely-fitting nightcap.

She stood for a moment looking first at one sleeper, then at the other, then anxiously at the timepiece whose moving hands waited for no one. At last she took up the lamp, and going into the closet she closed the door, and stooping down began to shake her brother gently with one hand.

"Oh, ya! What are ye about?" was the unwary retort from the sleeper awakened, who was kicking out and striving to free himself from her hand; then, becoming aware of all that had happened, and the jeopardy he was in, he sat up with a terrified glare in his now wideawake eyes.

"You have done for yourself and me," hissed Nancy in his ear, for she heard the voice of her husband calling out to know

where she might be, and what that noise was?

The danger, however, made her bold. She determined to make one more effort before she gave in. With a warning look to her brother to keep quiet she issued from the cupboard, and going up to her husband, who was only half awake, she said in a hurried tone loud enough for Roland to hear:

"I thought it was the cat in the cupboard, but it is nothing. I am sorry I was so stupid. Go to sleep again, dear, and forgive me for waking you."

"It must be the cat, for I hear a noise in there," said John, raising himself in bed.

The lamp then fell with a crash to the floor, and Nancy staggered across the room to where her husband was feeling for his tinder-box. She had seen where it was, and quick as thought she put her hand upon it and concealed it under her clothes, which were lying on a chair.

John was getting angry, and would have sworn had he not been too pious. He began to get out of bed. There was, fortunately, no moon, but the Summer night was not dark. Almost fainting, Nancy, with one last mighty effort, flung herself right into her husband's arms, and put her hands up over his eyes.

"Don't be angry with me, dear, for letting the light drop, but I was frightened, and am now. Never mind the poor cat, but hold me close, because I am so foolish."

"How you tremble, you silly child!" said John. "Get into bed, and I will soon send away the cat."

But Nancy clung desperately to him; and Roland, judging that the situation was

becoming critical, and the attempt must be made now or never, opened the door and crawled stealthily along the floor and out at the other entrance.

John could not see him, but he heard the sound of something moving, and pushing his wife aside he made for the cupboard.

Nancy gave up all for lost, and fell almost swooning on the bed.

But thanks to her quick-witted foresight in hiding the tinder-box, John could only grope in the dark; he poked about in the cupboard for some time with a stick, and then gave up the search, concluding that the cat must have escaped, and being tired he went to bed again.

Nancy began to breathe more freely; after listening awhile and finding all quiet, she herself fell asleep, feeling satisfied that her brother had succeeded in making his way out of the house and down to the water side.

She was not certain about his fate, however, until some days later, when she was with her husband in Lincoln. One morning she was agreeably surprised by a missive brought to her by a stranger. On breaking the seal she spelt out that which told her of her brother's safe arrival on the shores of France.

I often wonder if in after years Nancy ever ventured to tell her husband who "the cat" really was.

There is no further definite record of her, nor, so far as I could learn, of her Puritan husband. Only the names on the window pane still remain to tell of their brief sojourn, and the adventure that took place in the fine old Manor House on the flat Lincolnshire coast.

✻ ✻ ✻ *WHEN BABY SMILES.* ✻ ✻ ✻

BY MARY FARRAH.

*When baby smiles his pretty wiles
Can banish gloom and sadness,
A charm for care is in the air,
The world's all joy and gladness;
And every day is merry May
When baby smiles.*

*When frowns unkind alone we find
The sunshine swiftly hiding,
No words could show the grief and woe
Within our hearts abiding;
Chill Winter's reign comes back again
When baby frowns.*

*When smiles once more the sun restore
Away go gloom and sorrow,
Blue are the skies, from baby's eyes
Our hearts their sunshine borrow;
Sweet Summer's here through all the year
When baby smiles.*

Mind versus Matter.

By C. W. LESLY.

How it was that the best oarsman did not win the race for the Diamond Sculls.

THE bright, sunny June morning had attracted many people down to the towing-path to watch the crews practising for the forthcoming regatta at Henley.

There was exceptional interest being shown this year in the racing, more especially in that for the Diamond Sculls, and it was whispered that some very considerable sums of money stood to be won or lost on the race; though now, about three weeks before the opening day of the regatta, things were very quiet owing to the hot favouritism of one particular candidate, John Wilton, who was considered by the knowing to be a practical certainty. And this morning, as he passed up the course with his easy, swinging stroke, there seemed no reason for thinking this general confidence in him to be misplaced.

When he pulled up to the landing-stage, and, stepping ashore, brought his light craft after him, there was a murmur of admiration from the little group of onlookers; the perfection of condition was so unmistakable in the smooth, white skin and long, sinewy limbs.

By one observer in particular he was most minutely scrutinised. This was a small, dark man, with a keen, intelligent face, who had followed the practice throughout with the aid of a pair of powerful field-glasses.

"Yes, it will require something very unusual to beat that man," he observed to himself, "but if Ramus is the man I take him to be, it can be done, and then—well, no more semi-starvation in an attic! It's worth the attempt. Ah, here he comes at last!"

Another single-sculler was just pulling up to the stage; a heavy, clumsy man this, with none of the graceful ease of the last, yet an opponent not to be despised, with his enormous bulk, which, in itself, could but tell, if only by sheer physical strength.

"Hallo, Gale, you down here?"

"Yes, I came to have a look at the practice, and I want to have a talk with

you, Ramus. Will you come for a stroll along the towing-path when you have got into your clothes?"

"Certainly, I will be out in a few minutes."

He turned into the dressing-room, and Gale moved slowly in the direction of the towing-path, his head bowed, deep in thought. The idea was feasible enough and could be carried through, he felt certain of it. But what of this man Ramus? Had he judged him aright, and was he hard up for money? For that was a very important point; he already knew enough of his past to feel sure that he was not over-conscientious if his interests were concerned. Well, he would try.

"Ah! Ramus, here you are! You have a nice day for practice! How are you getting on?"

"Oh, fairly well, thanks. I'm just beginning to get into the swing of it."

"Do you think you have any chance of winning?"

"Winning the Diamond Sculls? No! To tell the truth, I don't think I stand a ghost of a chance. That fellow Wilton is the best oar they have had for years; he has already done a record time in practice, and apart from him, there are other fellows much too good for me. No, I have not the faintest hope."

"Oh! I am sorry to hear that, but it is about this that I want to speak with you. Shall we sit down here? What I am going to say is very important."

They sat down on a seat by the side of the river, and Gale, after remaining silent for a few moments, turned to his companion.

"I suppose you would like to win this race?" he remarked.

"Of course I should, particularly as I have backed myself to do so for a pretty large sum, and cash is none too plentiful with me just now."

"You must have got good odds to tempt you, with the poor opinion of your chance of winning which you seem to have!"

"Yes, I have got six-to-one in fifties."

"That was certainly a tempting offer, and I daresay you could get plenty more at the same odds, eh?"

"Yes, I think I could get nearly as much as I wished to have."

"So I thought."

Then Gale, laying his arm on Ramus' arm, and looking into his face, said very quietly: "Suppose I tell you how you can make this race an absolute certainty for yourself!"

"What do you mean? Why, it is impossible, if——"

"Listen to me, it is not impossible; on the contrary, it is a comparatively simple matter. All you will have to do will be to follow my directions, and I guarantee that you will win without possibility of failure; you know as well as I do what that would mean. You have just said that there is no difficulty in getting any amount of money on, and, between us, there is no reason why we could not make a very nice little fortune."

"Yes! Yes! That is all plain enough, but how on earth do you propose to make it a certainty? That's what I want to know!"

"Well, that is my plan, and if you agree, I will explain the whole matter."

"I cannot promise anything until I know something of your idea, and you may as well understand that I will not take part in anything—'unpleasant.'"

"My dear fellow, make your mind easy on that point! I assure you that no harm will come to anyone, if that is what you mean; nothing beyond the loss of a little money, which is not of much account to them, and would mean a good deal to you and me. But you shall see for yourself. Have you anything special to do this afternoon?"

"No, nothing of importance."

"Good! Then you can come with me now. I am staying up the river at Reading, and if you will return with me I think I can satisfy you on all points."

"Well, you have aroused my curiosity, and I will come with pleasure; what you have in your mind I cannot conceive."

The two men walked down to the station, where they had the good fortune to find a train just about to start. The journey was passed in comparative silence, each fully occupied with his own thoughts. On arriving at Reading, Gale led his companion down to the river, where he had his own skiff moored.

"We have about a quarter of an hour's pull," he remarked, motioning Ramus into the boat, then, taking the oars, he turned the head of the boat up-stream, and in a short time they had left the town behind them. Continuing for some little way, Gale eventually pulled into the bank, and they stepped ashore into a flat meadow. Standing some distance back from the river was a large barn, towards which Gale at once directed his steps.

"Before we go any further, I should like to have your assurance that, what I am about to show you, you will never mention to a living soul, whether it meets with your approval or not."

"Certainly I will give you my word upon that."

"Thank you, that is all I want."

Without more ado, Gale unlocked a large padlock and pushed open the door.

The first, and, in fact, the only object which met the eye on entering was a long racing skiff, supported on trestles, and occupying the whole length of the barn. The floor was littered with tools of all sorts. There was nothing more.

"That is the boat which will win you the race if you wish," said Gale.

"But is that all? She may be a good enough craft, but——"

"Wait a bit, and you will soon understand. If you will lend me a hand we will get her down to the water. Will you take the bows while I take the stern?" As they carried it down, Ramus remarked that it felt unusually heavy, but Gale did not reply.

"Now get in and take her for a short pull, and see how she goes."

Ramus, having settled himself in the skiff, took it for a smart pull for a few minutes, then returned to where Gale was awaiting him on the bank.

"Well, what do you think of her? Pulls fairly easy, doesn't she?"

"Oh, yes, she goes all right, but really there is nothing exceptional about her."

"No, I did not expect you would think so, but now I will show you how she is exceptional, very exceptional indeed, as I think you will admit. You will notice that on the left-hand side of the stretcher there is a little brass screw, do you see? Now I want you to take another spin, and when you have got her fairly going, just move your left foot a bit to the side so that it will press on that screw; you will then be able to understand what I mean."

Ramus took the boat out into midstream

again, and taking it along at a smart pace, he shifted his foot so that it rested on the small screw which Gale had indicated to him:

Immediately a slight tremor ran throughout the boat's length, accompanied by a very faint, purring hum. In a moment the full explanation flashed upon him.

"Good Heavens! What an idea!" he exclaimed.

Paralysed with astonishment, he stopped rowing, and instead of the boat almost immediately coming to a standstill, it continued to glide forward and even to gain rather than to lose speed. Removing his foot the boat soon pulled up, and, turning round, he paddled slowly back to Gale, who had been keenly watching him the whole time.

Stepping ashore, he threw himself down on the grass, and did not speak for several minutes. At last he looked up.

"How did you come to think of it?"

"Quite by chance. It has always been a hobby of mine to play with small engines, and some time ago I picked up this little engine and fitted it into my dinghy, and by adding one or two improvements of my own invention, I succeeded in making it run with such perfect silence that none but those actually in the boat would ever have suspected it to contain such a thing as an engine.

"Then, a week or two ago, I was impressed by the large bets I noticed were being made on the race for the Diamond Sculls, and this plan occurred to me.

"It did not take long to transfer the engine into this racing skiff, and there you see it complete. I have given it a thorough test myself, and am convinced that the scheme is perfectly feasible. As to the speed, I myself, a very indifferent oarsman, have rowed the distance of the Henley course in less than record time.

"I propose that, in the actual races, you would, at the start, endeavour to gain a lead of two or three lengths by your own efforts, and from then until the finish use the motor only when required to maintain that lead, but of course you will be able to decide on that later, as it will be necessary to practise every day, so as to gain a perfect manipulation of the engine to use it to the best advantage. And now that you know all about it, tell me what you think of it all."

"Think of it! I think you are a genius, Gale; it is the neatest little plot I ever heard of."

"I am glad you think so, and I hope that means you will see it through."

"Yes, there's my hand on it!"

"Thank you, Ramus, I thought you would not disappoint me. And now, suppose we get her back to the barn."

When they had placed the boat once more on the trestles, Ramus made a close examination of the engine, with its small propeller, which protruded well below the water-line. Everything had been carried out with the utmost care and ingenuity, and it would have required the closest examination to have detected anything unusual. Having carefully locked the door of the barn, the two men re-entered their boat and returned to Reading, and, after making arrangements to meet on the morrow, they parted for the night.

Every afternoon without fail, for the next three weeks, they met at the old barn, when Ramus would practise the working of the little engine until he could control the movement of the boat to a nicety, Gale running up and down the bank scrutinising every action, suggesting this or that improvement, until nothing seemed wanting. In the evenings they would return to town, to go about systematically and quietly, taking up every bet that offered itself.

And now at last the opening day of the regatta dawned, dawned with a cloudless sky and scarcely a breath of wind.

Since a comparatively early hour the crowds of people had been pouring into the little riverside town, which seems to sleep throughout the year and all of a sudden to spring into life, to awake in a very vortex of excitement and gaiety. Road, river, and rail are eager competitors to carry the larger loads of humanity. Every craft that will float is pressed into service, to swell the jumbled mass, packed so tightly as to resemble one enormous raft.

It happened that Ramus was drawn to row in the first heat of the Diamond Sculls, the fourth event on the card; his opponent was a very indifferent oarsman, which was as he would have wished, giving him a good opportunity to "get his hand in."

The time soon came for him to be getting down to the starting post. Gale, holding the boat steady while he settled himself, whispered a few last words of encouragement and advice, then, pushing out into mid-stream, he paddled slowly down the course.

He felt excited and nervous, as if all eyes could penetrate the flimsy cedar and canvas and discover what was concealed beneath. But this soon wore off, and by the time he had reached the starting post he had fully

recovered his composure and confidence. His opponent was already there, and Ramus took his place, which was on the Berkshire side of the river.

They had not long to wait, and soon received the signal to start. Ramus, in accordance with his prearranged plan, immediately putting all his strength into the work, soon held a useful lead, and then settled down more quietly to maintain it. The other man was not pressing him, and gave him no difficulty in doing so, and so they continued for some three-quarters of the course; then, for the first time, his opponent began to exert himself, and the distance between them quickly grew less.

Now was the time! Ramus quietly slid his foot a few inches to the left along the stretcher.

Amidst the roar of voices, no one, not even Ramus himself, heard the faint hum which followed, but all noticed that, do what he would, the second man could not make up another inch. Ramus, with his long, powerful stroke, seemed to carry his craft along like a feather, with a uniform gliding motion that was irresistible, and a few minutes later had passed the post, a winner by several lengths.

On the following day his race was practically a repetition of the first, and now there only remained the final to be rowed against Wilton, who, up to now, had not disappointed his admirers, having experienced no difficulty in reaching the final.

And so, on the last day, little else was talked about, but the coming struggle between these two rivals who had each so far outclassed his other opponents. Opinion was certainly still in favour of Wilton, but

there was no longer that absolute confidence in him which hitherto had been so general, and there were not a few men who occasionally referred somewhat anxiously to sundry entries in their pocket-books.

When at last the report of the signal is heard, a great quiet falls upon the immense crowds afloat and ashore, a hush of the keenest expectancy, until a far-distant roar of voices proclaims that the boats are in sight.

Far down the course can be discerned the cause of all the tumult; two little specks they seem, but every moment growing larger.

Wilton leads! Wilton leads! Ramus leads! And so on, as amidst a tumult of contradiction and uproar they approach.

Soon it can be seen clearly that the boat on the Berkshire side indeed holds a lead of a length or more. It is Ramus; he seems fresh and full of vigour, and is rowing with comparatively little effort.

Wilton, too, is rowing splendidly, his bows just on a level with the other's stern. The crowd eagerly awaits the final effort which should take him up, and now it comes; inch by inch the little head-flag creeps up until it is on a level with Ramus' body, but there it remains.

They are now drawing perilously near the finish, and still there is no alteration in their respective positions. The shouts are deafening, shrieking, yelling, imploring, but not another inch can he gain. Another moment and they are past the post, Ramus the winner by half-a-length.

"A little 'mind' will overcome a great deal of 'matter,'" remarked Gale, with a contented smile, as they stepped on to the platform at Paddington Station a few hours later:

THE FORSAKEN.

*She left it lying 'neath the hedge,
Nor did she shed a tear,
Then fled away with frenzied step,
As though consumed with fear.*

*Silent and motionless it lay,
A tiny thing so white;
The roadside grass nigh covered it
From any wanderer's sight.*

*How could she leave it far from home,
Alone, uncared for, there?
Why had she fled so guiltily?
What secret could she bear?*

*I chanced upon the tiny thing
As in the hedge it lay,
And bore it off so tenderly
That gorgeous Summer's day:
Yet why the hen had laid it there
Was more than I could say.*

Tales of My Clients.

✱ ✱ By A LADY PHOTOGRAPHER.

Edited by GERTIE DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES.

Beatrice Hannel, an officer's daughter, opens an art-photographic studio in Kensington as a means of adding to her slender income. She here tells some of the most fascinating romances in which, through her clients, she has been concerned. Each story is complete in itself.

IV.—A Plot and a Pendant.

AS a general rule the shy man does not appeal to me, but when it is just the right sort of shyness—as displayed by a fair giant who walked into the reception lounge one sunny Spring morning—I feel rather more lenient about the matter.

This tall, good-looking individual with abashed, boyish blue eyes, and wearing a rough grey, cosy sort of suit, was so delightfully diffident that my business-like heart warmed towards him at once.

"I have been commissioned to ask if you will kindly go to Gate Lodge, St. Luke's Forest, and take a portrait of Miss Valeta Prince in her own boudoir," he began rather hesitatingly.

"Is that Miss Prince, the actress?" I inquired.

"It is!" he replied, and behind the diffidence I seemed to suddenly discover a note of dormant hostility.

"How delightful!" I gushed. "Miss Prince is so beautiful that to photograph her will be a most congenial task."

Immediately the hostility vanished, so I saw I had struck the right note.

"Will to-morrow at two o'clock be convenient to Miss Prince, do you know?" I added, opening the appointment book.

"Er—er—to-morrow will be Wednesday won't it? Er—*matinée* day, you know—so perhaps Thursday—"

"Thursday will suit me, won't it, Miss Thorne?" I said, turning to my receptionist, who had taken the appointment book from my hand.

"Not the morning, but the afternoon at 2.25 is free," she answered, with impressive exactitude.

"Then I will be round at 2.25 on Thursday," I replied.

"Thanks, awfully—thank you. I'll—I'll let her know. Good-day—thank you." And, with a final smile that was frank and

pleasing, Miss Prince's messenger took his departure.

"I shall enjoy taking Valeta Prince—she ought to make an exquisite study picture," I remarked, when the swing doors had swung together behind the fair-haired giant.

Miss Thorne's lips grew thin, as they usually did when a young and beautiful woman was mentioned.

"Oh! yes, she's undoubtedly good-looking in a *certain style*, which makes it all the worse for poor old Lord Greenstairs," she replied, with a sigh that was presumably intended as a tribute of sympathy towards the absent Earl.

"But how will Valeta Prince's certain style of good looks affect Lord Greenstairs?" I inquired.

"Because I suppose it is her personal appearance (one can't imagine it is her mental charm!) that has attracted his son, Viscount Laurence. Didn't you know that 'Lord Laurie'—as he is called—wants to marry Valeta Prince, and that the Earl is so conscientiously prejudiced against the stage that he won't even see this woman who is conniving to become a Countess? How shameless these creatures are, to be sure!"

"But why should he object? Valeta Prince is well-born, has been marvelously plucky in saving her mother and sister from ruin by adopting the stage as a profession, and not even her worst enemy could attempt to suggest anything against her personal reputation," I retorted hotly.

"Very likely, Miss Hannel, very likely: You are always so charitable. Of course I can't help thinking that it would be rather tragic for a family like the Laurences to be forced to receive a mummer in their midst: However, I don't think that is likely to occur, because I am told that Valeta Prince refuses to marry Lord Laurie without his father's consent (she is too clever! Hat

ha!), and as Lord Greenstairs won't so much as even see 'The Crown' leading lady, his sanction isn't very likely to be obtained."

"Lord Greenstairs lives at 00A Park Lane, doesn't he?" I inquired.

"Yes, that large grey house with the lattice work over the portico, and—ah! perhaps it would interest you to read a paragraph in this week's *M. A. P.* I was just glancing at it when Miss Prince's—er—friend came in."

And here Miss Thorne passed me a copy of that comprehensive penny weekly—*Mainly About People*:

"Lord Greenstairs, whose family anxieties are just now causing some comment," I read, "is a man of extraordinary tenacity of purpose. It will be remembered how he overcame that right-of-way difficulty in Sunshire, and there is very little doubt that he will also succeed in his present endeavour—which is to recover a lost family trinket. There are two huge turquoise and diamond pendants shaped in the design of a man's profile, which came to the Laurence family in the reign of Henry VIII. Two hundred years ago one of these was sold by a scapegrace son, and has never been found since. One pendant, with the profile face looking from right to left, is in Lord Greenstairs' possession, but it is his great wish to find the other, for which it is reported he will pay any price the owner cares to ask!"

"Thank you, Miss Thorne, that is very interesting. I only hope Lord Greenstairs will expend all his determination on seeking to find his pendant, so that he won't have any left wherewith to oppose his son!" I said, as I laid down the paper and left the lounge before my receptionist had time to frame any politely acid rejoinder.

On Thursday afternoon, when I arrived at Gate Lodge, I was at once shown into the actress' boudoir—a bright, sunny room, where there would be excellent light for indoor photographic purposes.

It was a charming apartment, full of those dainty, useless trifles which are so essentially part of an attractive woman.

I glanced at everything—at the white rug decorated by a purring black Persian puss adorned with a scarlet satin bow; at the open piano, on which stood the most modern thing in modern love-songs; at the great stacks of scented flowers which seemed to tell of the wonderful Summer that was coming, and as I was just about to inspect a specially choice mezzotint, the door opened and my client entered the room.

When watching Valeta Prince across the footlights I had often thought of her as the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and now, viewed by the investigating glare of

late Spring sunshine, I more than ever indorsed my own opinion.

Valeta Prince (whose real name was Valeta King, by the by) was tall, and had a perfect figure; her hair was full of wonderful tints that comprised the gold of Spring buttercups and the russet of Autumn leaves; her eyes were blue and true and beautiful; her skin was soft and unhurt by grease paints, and her mouth was red as any Kentish poppy.

She wore a long, pale pink satin kimono fastened up at the throat, which evidently served as a wrap to cover her gown until I was ready for her to pose.

"Good morning, Miss Hannel, it is very kind of you to come," she said, shaking my hand with a friendliness and freedom that would probably have made old Lord Greenstairs' aristocratic silver locks stand very much on end. "I know it must be an awful nuisance to photograph people who will persist in being surrounded by their own chairs and tables; but it is such a luxury for the sitter not to be forced to go out and assume a weary, worried look long before she reaches the studio!"

Of course, I assured Miss Prince that it was a great pleasure to be permitted a peep into a celebrity's private apartments, after which my camera was brought in and adjusted.

"Now, if you are ready I'll take off my wrap, but I'm such a shivery mortal that I hate to be *décolletée* longer than I can help," said Valeta, when everything was in order.

Then she threw aside the pink satin kimono and revealed an exquisite picture gown of white velvet, worn without any ornament except a girdle of uncut turquoises set in gold chains, and hanging round her full white throat a—a—

"Good Heavens!"

I didn't utter this ejaculation, but I nearly did so.

How ever did it get into her possession? It being a pendant shaped like a man's profile and set with turquoises and diamonds!

In an instant I, of course, remembered the par in *M. A. P.*, and also the information which Miss Thorne had supplied concerning Lord Greenstairs' son and my beautiful companion.

Could it be that Lord Laurie had actually *stolen* the trinket which his father prized so greatly, in order to give it to the woman he loved?

The idea was a shocking one, and I couldn't help being glad that Miss Thorne

was not present, because I knew how she would have enjoyed feeling righteous about the whole affair! I didn't feel righteous—only sorry and bewildered!

"Now, Miss Hannel, I'm ready if you are. Shall I be pensive over a rose, merry over a book held upside down, or—ah! let me be taken holding my black treasure in my arms for luck—for *luck*." And with these last words Valeta lifted the purring kitten from the rug and poised it on the hollow of her soft neck.

It was a perfect picture. The smiling, white-gowned girl, the black kitten, the Spring sunlight, bowls of many-coloured flowers, and—the quaint, flashing pendant.

"Remain exactly as you are, please—don't move—*now*," I cried, with hushed enthusiasm.

Click!—and the portrait of a woman wearing a trinket she had no right to wear was taken!

"Will it be a success, do you think? Will my black Fatima and my gown, and—and this pendant come out clearly, do you think?" cried Valeta eagerly.

The audacity of this last query almost betrayed me into an expression of astonishment, till I remembered that probably Valeta was ignorant of the real facts concerning her lover's gift.

"So far as I can judge it will be an immense success," I answered.

"Then please will you let me have a dozen cabinets and one very large *tinted* panel portrait as soon as possible. You do tint pictures, do you not?"

"Oh! yes, certainly."

"I am glad, because I should like it faintly coloured—my hair, complexion, and eyes, Fatima, Fatima's red bow, the flowers, and—and the—the pendant. You can show that it is set with turquoises and diamonds, can't you? Yes? That's right! And it will come out *quite* distinctly?"

"Oh! quite—yes!"

"Thank you, and please remember that the sooner you can let me have the tinted picture the more grateful I shall be. Er—er—I suppose you put your name and the address of your studio on the photograph?"

"It is engraved on every mount."

"Oh! yes—of course! I inquired because if the portrait is mercifully flattering I daresay lots of my professional friends will ask for the address—although you are too famous, Miss Hannel, not to be known by anyone who knows anything. My brother,

who goes in for very bad amateur photography, calls you the 'Camera Queen'!"

Her brother! I was glad to hear she had a brother, because I had been rather wondering about the nice, shy young man who called to make the appointment. Evidently he was the relative in question.

For another ten minutes we chatted about less than nothing in particular, then, with a mutual feeling of cordiality, said good-bye and murmured vague hopes of meeting again—little thinking in what a fateful and curious fashion those hopes would be fulfilled!

In a week's time the large, tinted panel picture (one of my very greatest successes) was dispatched, and four days later, when I had temporarily forgotten the incident, something occurred which once more brought the subject of Valeta Prince and her unpropitious love-affair uppermost in my mind.

I was just dictating a request for long-deferred payment that was to be sent off to a millionaire's wife, when I received the information that "the Earl of Greenstairs would be glad to speak to me at once if I could grant him a few moments' interview."

The Earl of Greenstairs! Lord Laurie's father! Valeta Prince's antagonist! What did it mean?

Some instinct seemed to tell me that the narrow-minded nobleman had not come to pay me a professional visit, so, alive with anticipation—not entirely unmixed with trepidation, I'm ashamed to confess!—I passed into the green waiting-room, where a silver-haired, magnificently-built old gentleman was excitedly pacing up and down.

"Lord Greenstairs?" I said interrogatively.

"Yes, my dear madam—yes. I am extremely obliged to you for granting me an interview. I would not have troubled you except that I believe with your help I may at last be able to succeed where hitherto I have failed. Would you most kindly divulge the name and address of the beautiful lady depicted in this photograph?" And, with these last words, he produced the large, tinted panel portrait of Valeta Prince, which I had dispatched four days previously!

I felt so inarticulate with astonishment that nothing but a few half-gasping mumbles were possible at the moment.

"Needless to say I would not have troubled you," continued the old gentleman, "but when I received this exquisite work of art, anonymously and by post, and saw your

name and address on the mount, naturally my first impulse was to apply to you for help—and I pray you not to withhold that assistance.”

“But—er—before I answer, may I ask why you wish for the information?” I inquired, thinking to gain time by prevarication.

For a moment Lord Greenstairs looked as though he were about to explode in consequence of my not according him unquestioning compliance; but then, evidently realising that it was well to keep on my right side, he answered with temperate calmness:

“I require your assistance in regaining this pendant, which should belong to the Laurence family jewels,” he said, indicating the photographed trinket! (So Lord Laurie *had* committed a family theft for the sake of his *inamorata*! Oh! what could I do to screen them?) “I may mention that two absolutely unique pendants came into the possession of a certain James Laurence in the reign of Henry VIII., and 200 years later one was sold by a descendant in order to pay a gambling debt. To discover and buy back this missing pendant before I die, is one of the hopes of my old age; and by telling me what I ask, you may enable me to achieve my desires.”

“Then the pendant in the picture——”

“Is the missing pendant which turns from *left to right*, as you see. The one in my possession turns from *right to left*, so undoubtedly this very beautiful lady (whose face is the most captivating I have ever seen) is wearing its companion.”

Once more I looked at the portrait and saw that Lord Greenstairs spoke correctly.

If I had only been a little more observant of detail I should never have mentally suspected Lord Laurie of an ignoble action—but it’s in detail that we women, who think ourselves so clever, always *do* fail!

So the missing family trinket was in the possession of the girl Lord Laurie loved!—of the actress whom the Earl of Greenstairs condemned and refused to see—of the actress whose name and address he now demanded!

The situation was so full of complications that I hardly knew how to act, and just as I was about to mumble something else essentially feminine, vague, and unsatisfactory, Lord Greenstairs spoke again.

“I see, my dear lady, that you hesitate, and I can fully appreciate your professional reluctance. Therefore, in order to suggest

a plan which will perhaps better meet your views and be most delightful for me, I beg that you will most kindly *conduct* me to the lady in question. My electric brougham is outside—if you will direct my coachman, and permit me to accompany you, a great service will be rendered to an old man who humbly puts himself in your charming hands.”

This, of course, quite settled the question.

No modern young woman could possibly withstand the exquisite, bygone courtesy of manner which accompanied this speech; therefore, a quarter of an hour later, Beatrice Hannel, art-photographer, and the Earl of Greenstairs, dogmatic aristocrat, were gliding through the London streets *en route* for St. Luke’s Forest.

When we reached Gate Lodge it was to find that “Miss King” (I used her real name when addressing the servant in order not to arouse my companion’s suspicions) was at home.

Quickly I drew out a card and in a few words explained the situation, with the result that five minutes after we had been ushered into the boudoir Valeta made her appearance.

She was very simply attired in a graceful, cream woollen gown unrelieved by a single note of colour except the turquoise and diamond “Face Pendant,” which hung from a blue ribbon tied about her neck, and never had she looked sweeter, more gracious, or more beautiful.

“Madam,” began Lord Greenstairs, bowing low before her, “I crave your pardon for this intrusion—the reason of which I believe Miss Hannel has kindly explained—but the anonymous sender of your beautiful and most realistic portrait is responsible for my presence here to-day.”

“Then I am grateful to the sender *and* the portrait—do please sit down,” replied Valeta, with a smile that was irresistible—evidently *quite* irresistible to the gallant old Earl!

“May I at once come to the point and ask how that pendant you are wearing, and which forms a pair to one of the Laurence trinkets, came into your possession?” said Lord Greenstairs, as he dropped into an arm-chair.

“Certainly, I’ll gladly tell you. My grandfather, Commander King——”

“Not Johnny Mark King——”

“Yes, that was he——”

For a moment the Earl seemed speechless

with surprise and emotion, then making an effort he recovered himself and said :

"Commander John Mark King was a splendid memory belonging to my young manhood. He saved my life during that squall in '75, when the *Cynthia* and nearly all aboard went down! We only met half-a-dozen times, but I have never forgotten a splendid fellow in this world where there are so few!"

Valeta's face paled, and a look of great hope came into her eyes.

"I never heard that you knew him! How strange!" she whispered half to herself. Then, rousing herself to once more face the situation, she continued :

"Well, grandfather bought this pendant from some impoverished French nobleman whose ancestors had acquired it in England over a century previously. That is all I know. He gave it to my mother before he died, and *now* it is mine!"

"And do you prize it very greatly?" asked Lord Greenstairs huskily.

"I—I——"

"Oh! my dear young lady, you who have so much youth, so much beauty and charm, can surely afford to be generous! There is no price which I would not pay to recover the pendant you are now wearing. Name your own terms and I shall most gratefully comply."

Swiftly Valeta rose to her feet and laid one white, ringless hand upon his arm:

"You—you really *mean* that?" she panted.

"Most assuredly!"

"Then," swiftly taking a photograph from a drawer of the ebony escritoire—"then, Lord Greenstairs, in return for my pendant I ask for—*HIM*!"

In astonishment I, who was getting weary of the *rôle* of spectator (a dull *rôle* for youth to play!) looked over the Earl's shoulder and saw that he was gazing at a portrait of the nice, shy young man who had called and made the appointment for me to visit Valeta's house—a portrait that was signed "*To my Valeta, with unending devotion.—Laurie.*"

For a moment the old man was quite silent, then, just as he seemed making an effort to speak, Valeta interrupted him with a passionate outburst of contrition.

"No, no, I do not mean it—I can't do it—I *can't*," she cried. "We have plotted, Lord Greenstairs, but I will turn King's evidence even against my dearest! Less than a month ago your son accidentally discovered that I possessed the pendant for which he told me you had been seeking for years. Then we schemed how I was to be photographed wearing the trinket, that the portrait was to be sent to you, and when you had secured my address from Miss Hannel (we made so sure of events) that I was to ask my own price in return for the pendant. I *have* asked, but now I draw back—I can't—I can't——"

But as Valeta broke into a more bitter passion of tears than she had ever simulated on the stage, the sentence remained unfinished:

Lord Greenstairs watched her for a moment, glanced scrutinisingly round the refined, womanly room, and then crossed towards the couch on which she had sunk.

Very gently he laid a blue-veined old hand upon her shoulder.

"And I, too, draw back," he said distinctly and steadily. "I no longer wish the pendant returned to me"—(oh! what a disappointment when I hoped he was drawing back his objections to the marriage!) "yes, I no longer wish for the pendant to be returned, on condition that it remains in the family. The future Countess of Greenstairs should be its owner, and—my dear, may I ask forgiveness and welcome my daughter at last?"

I really can't detail what happened after that, because, with my usual romantic tenderness, I found it impossible to remain in the boudoir without an unseemly exhibition of emotion.

However, as I have just received an invitation to go and stay at Greenstairs Castle, and at the same time to photograph "Grandpapa and baby taken together," I suppose everything was all right.

Lady Laurence recites a great deal at entertainments given for charity, and although she has degenerated as an artist, she has triumphed as a woman—so perhaps that is best.

Anyhow *she* says it is, and it is always safe to accept the assertions of people with experience.

(Another of Miss Hannel's interesting experiences will appear next month.)

STORIES IN VERSE.

Stories told in rhyme afford a pleasant relief to those in prose ; they have, too, a certain swing and crispness about them which conduce to easy reading. Any readers whose talents lie in the direction of verse-making are invited to send contributions suitable for this feature to the Editor,
THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The Letters.

By FRED EDMONDS.

Young Algernon Augustus
Was seated in his den,
Where books were crying : "Dust us,
Not merely now and then,

"But let us have a warder
To marshal us with care,
And check the sad disorder
Prevailing everywhere."

This voice was heard distinctly
By Algernon, who sighed ;
To put it quite succinctly,
He dreamt a future bride.

The beautiful Miss Waters
He simply longed to wed ;
That "fairest of Eve's daughters"
Had sent him off his head.

That is, I should say, "nearly,"
Because, as only fit,
Although he loved her dearly,
She loved him back a bit.

And now he wrote a letter
Which told his wealth of love ;
How every time he met her
He felt her far above

His puny sighs and yearnings ;
And yet he dared to lay
Himself and all his earnings
Down at her feet that day:

"My dear one, let us marry—
I have sufficient gold.
There is no need to tarry
Till both of us are old."

Completing his epistle,
He first put down his pen,
Then gave a thoughtful whistle
And took it up again.

There was a certain maiden
Of quite uncertain age,
With fads and fancies laden,
Who earned a modest wage

By working with her needle,
And Algy thought of her,
And said : "My shirts indeed'll
Require, unless I err,

"A thorough overhauling:
Miss Wiggins is the one !
I'll write instead of calling,
And get them neatly done."

He wrote—Alas ! when written
He sent the letters wrong.
Miss Wiggins, Cupid-smitten,
Had sighed and waited long,

And when she read : "Dear Alice,"
And saw it came from "him,"
With joy her cup (or chalice)
Was filled up to the brim.

"It was so unexpected,"
But "wonders never cease."
Of letters misdirected
No hint disturbed her peace.

Augustus, on the morrow,
Got up and calmly dressed ;
For neither joy nor sorrow
Was reigning in his breast.

A sort of patent mixture
Held in his bosom sway ;
No feeling was a fixture,
He was not grave or gay,

But felt it only decent
To wait for a reply:
His letter was so recent
He did not wonder why

The post no answer brought him:
He turned his mind to shirts ;
Of other things bethought him,
Reflecting that it hurts

One's dearest predilections
To wear what isn't "right,"
So called to give directions,
And to receive—a fright !

Miss Wiggins, when she spied him,
Just flopped into his arms,
With pure devotion eyed him,
The captive of her charms.

Quoth she : " This is so sudden,"
He seemed to think so, too !
It scared the very stud in
His collar—out it flew:

He thought it sudden madness
And gazed on her with dread:
" Farewell, farewell to sadness,
Dear Algernon," she said.

" Your letter is my charter
Of fair, connubial bliss ;
For gold I would not barter
Such happiness as this."

Oh, what a situation !
How could it well be worse ?
You hardly feel elation
When you have lost your purse,

But this was far more tragic ;
And next, to crown the lot,
Appeared, as if by magic,
Miss Waters on the spot.

She stood one moment staring,
Then said : " It's pretty clear,
Whatever you're preparing,
I am not wanted here."

Augustus cried in terror:
" Oh, do not, do not go !
There is some ghastly error,
But what I do not know."

" Well, first I think you'd better
Explain as best you can
This most peculiar letter,
You undeserving man.

" It tells me, as I read it,
That Mr. Smith requests
Attention, for they need it,
To all his shirts and vests !

" Now, Mr. Smith, how dare you
Refer your shirts to me ?
Such impudence is rare you
Must certainly agree."

This burst of stormy weathe.
Poor Algy's feelings rasped ;
He pulled himself together—
" Wrong envelopes ! " he gasped.

You might have heard a pin stir,
(Or drop, I ought to say).
Miss Wiggins, gallant spinster,
Then broke into the fray :

" Alas, alas, what folly
Was mine, and only mine !
With bitter melancholy
My visions I resign.

" My friends, accept my blessing,
'Tis all I have to give,
Each other's love possessing
May you united live."

Her speech abruptly ended,
Miss Wiggins sat her down ;
Miss Waters seemed offended
And half inclined to frown:

This business-like proceeding
She scarce could understand ;
But Algy's eyes were pleading—
She took his proffered hand !

The Poison Delightful. ❀ ❀

A Story founded on Fact. ❀ By FLORA BANDFIELD.

Ages ago, in the far distant East,
King Jemsheed o'er Persia held sway,
And exceedingly fond of the fruit of the vine,
This monarch discovered the secret of wine
By chance in a curious way.

From the vineyards once came far more
grapes than required,
And wishing that none be destroyed,
It occurred to the prince that the finest to spare
Might be surely preserved if but packed with
great care,
And could then, later on, be enjoyed.

Vessels he ordered at once to be filled
With the luscious fruit thus set aside;
These in a vault were stored safely away,
To be opened again, when, at some future day,
He might not be so well supplied.

Some time now elapsed ere those grapes saw
the light,
For the year had a fruitful one been;
Down in the darkness of course in meantime,
They were slowly fermenting and turning
to wine,
'Mongst them all not a good one was seen.

The juice the King tasted, which so acid
proved,
He declared that it poison must be,
And ordered that all should be carefully
strained
Into jars labeled clearly, each liquid con-
tained
That undoubtedly fatal would be.

Why he kept the grape poison is not very
clear,
Unless 'twas intended indeed
That a dose should be given to each erring
slave,
Or anyone else who should venture to brave
The wrath of the royal Jemsheed.

Months passed, and a light of the harem was
seized
With neuralgic sharp pains in the head;
All kinds of remedies vainly she tried,
Charms and decoctions with what-not beside,
Till pleasure in life had quite fled.

Wandering around in this unhappy mood,
When the pain intense happened to be,
That collection of jars chanced Zertina to
find,
Then swiftly the thought darted into her
mind
That by death she at length might be free.

Glancing to see that no watchers were near,
To those fatal jars glided she close;
And lifting the lid of the nearest one up,
Her tiny hand forming an improvised cup,
Extracted a rather large dose.

The wine had an excellent flavour acquired,
It so long undisturbed had been kept,
Amazement was stamped on her beautiful
face,
As she carefully put the lid back in its
place,
And away from the room quickly crept.

On the soft, silken cushions the fair one sank
down,
Feeling certain that Death must be nigh,
But the potion instead soothed her into a
sleep
Of a lengthy duration, refreshing and deep,
And she woke with less pain by-and-by.

Marveling much that she was still alive,
While delighted to feel such relief,
Zertina resolved one more dose to obtain,
And so cure completely the now much eased
pain,
Tho' feeling somewhat like a thief.

But many more visits were afterwards paid,
For the wine was of exquisite taste;
Two jars were finished and part of a third,
When one day, as footsteps approaching were
heard,
She fled in precipitate haste.

In her flight quite forgetting the lid to replace,
By a slave it was seen on the ground.
Close by the side lay a scarf rich and rare,
And wondering much how they came to be
there,
He looked with suspicion around.

Soon were discovered the two empty jars,
But five of them untouched were left.
The King, when informed of this raid on his
store,
Was highly indignant, but puzzled still more,
It seemed such a very odd theft.

But having the rich silken scarf once beheld,
He knew it Zerlina's to be ;
Command being sent to her then to appear,
She presently entered and trembled with fear,
The monarch's stern aspect to see.

Throwing herself at the feet of Jemsheed,
The frightened, fair culprit confessed
How, finding the pain was too great to endure,
She by chance in those jars had discovered
a cure
Which most wonderful flavour possessed.

Much astonished, the King ordered some to
be brought,
When his favourite's speech had been
heard ;
He its former acidity did not forget,
Nor could he believe it had altered, but yet
Would just see if some change had occurred.

The slave soon returned with a goblet of gold,
Filled up with red wine to the brim ;
Amazed, Jemsheed watched how it sparkled
and gleamed,
Perfect and rich in its colour it seemed
As the rubies incrusting the rim.

Then when he had tasted, so great his delight,
Zerlina full pardon obtained ;
While a sumptuous feast he resolved should
be served,
And as principal item for it he reserved
The contents of the jars that remained:

At this notable banquet to each one was brought
A cup of the wonderful wine ;
Enchanted, the whole of the guests quite agreed
That thereafter the name of their great King
Jemsheed
With additional lustre would shine:

And as thro' the length and the breadth of the
land
The juice of the grape became famed,
The Persians, rememb'ring the curious way
In which 'twas discovered, henceforth from
that day
The Poison Delightful it named.

THE BACHELOR OWL.

BY HAROLD SIMPSON.

Two little birds, two big trees,
Two little songs on the evening breeze :
" I want someone to love," piped she ;
" I want a nice little wife," sighed he.
And the bachelor owl, he laughed : " To woo,
What a pair of fools are these birdies two ! "

Two little birds on two big trees,
Singing of love to the evening breeze :
And very soon
The pale, pale moon
Saw a cosy little spoon through the two big
trees.

Two little birds, one big tree,
As close as two little birds could be.
" Oh, isn't this cosy ? " murmured she:
" I am so glad that I left my tree."
But the bachelor owl, he sneered : " To wed,
They'll very soon wish that they both were
dead ! "

Two little birds on one big tree,
As happy as two little birds could be ;
For they didn't care,
As they nestled there,
For the owl and his sneer at the one big tree:

Six little birds, one big tree,
Two little birds and a family:
" Oh, this is a bit of a frost ! " growled he:
" I haven't much use for a family."
And the bachelor owl, he laughed : " Ho ! ho !
Marriage is a failure, and I told you so ! "

Two little birds on one big tree,
One very tired of his family.
And before the chicks had grown
One little bird had flown,
Left one little bird alone with her family.

Then the bachelor owl, he laughed : " Hee !
hee !
Love doesn't last very long, you see ! "
But the little bird fed them as well as she could,
And brought them up as a little bird should,
Till there came to pass what I very much fear
May happen to all who sit and sneer.

Two little birds on one big tree,
For the other little bird came back, you see :
And the owl, in disgust,
Sat and swore till he bust,
And I think his fate was just, as you'll all
agree.

The Queen's Captive.

By JOHN RANKINE.

Telling why Her Majesty allowed her to be liberated.

OVER the velvet-like turf of the large garden behind her ancient palace at Holyrood, Mary Stuart of Scotland slowly sauntered one lovely morn in June.

The branches of the massive lime-trees which skirted the Palace walls seemed like sinking under the burden of their cool leaves. The slopes of Arthur's Seat were decked in all the bright green of early Summer.

The sun seemed as if resting for a moment on the summit of the hill, after his long morning march through the sky, unchallenged by the tiniest fleck of cloud. A soft, exhilarating breeze was wafted westwards from St. Leonards, tempering the oppressive heat. All Nature seemed pulsating with life; each sight and sound contributed to the natural splendour; simply to be alive on such a day was an unspeakable privilege.

The Queen sat down on a quaintly-carved oaken bench, and cast a careless glance over the garden. A pretty, richly-clad page hovered near, waiting on her word. Here and there, between the distant bushes, could be caught occasional glimpses of the spotlessly white and ornate dresses of the Maids of Honour whom Her Majesty had just dismissed from her presence.

She wished to be alone. It was but a few months since that "most dull and gloomy day" when she had returned to her realm. But it seemed as if years had passed. For, in thought, Her Majesty was ever harking back to the land of her girlhood and early love.

To see her sitting there in the golden sunlight, it seemed incredible that that slip of a girl was indeed Scotland's Queen. She was but nineteen years of age, and the bright glance of her sweet, hazel eyes, the saint-like smoothness of her brow, were strangely incompatible with the cares of Queenship and the weary turmoil of State affairs.

"Sir Hugh Raeburn has come to offer his allegiance to Your Majesty," said the page, respectfully intruding on his Royal mistress.

"Lead him hither."

The page withdrew, reappearing a few minutes later accompanied by a tall, white-bearded man.

Sir Hugh Raeburn was one of Scotland's worthiest chiefs. Though his courage and skill as a soldier had been abundantly proved, he was more a man of study than a man of strife. He lived in times when Scotsmen were impatient of words, and when differences were settled on a wider floor than that of a council chamber. Yet all men respected the peace-loving Sir Hugh. For well they knew that he was ever ready to prove with his good sword that his great culture was not greater than his courage.

A serious illness had prevented him pledging his loyalty to the young Queen when she arrived from France. But now he had come to offer his apologies and repair the omission.

Expressions of regret were forming upon his lips, but, ere he could give them utterance, Mary Stuart, with that graciousness which always characterised her race, sweetly said:

"A truce to apologies, Sir Hugh. We are proud to welcome one whose praises are so widely sung. The tidings of your sickness occasioned our sorrow and sympathy. But, if looks count anything, you are yourself again."

"I am grateful to Heaven for restoration to health. Yet the prospect of paying devotion to so worthy a Queen was not without effect in speeding my recovery."

"Fie, Sir Hugh," laughed the Queen. "Books evidently have not weakened your power to pay a pretty compliment. But what of your daughter? We have heard——"

The smile faded from Sir Hugh's face. The monarch's ever-alert eyes were quick to note the change.

"Why do your brows bend so?" she asked.

"Not without cause, Your Majesty. I have coaxed or compelled bearded men oft enough. Yet I know not how to deal with a chit of a girl, and that my own daughter."

"What is her offence?"

"A matter of marrying."

"Surely that is a subject in which she is entitled to have a voice?"

"She is young, Your Majesty, and lacks wisdom."

"How young?"

"Nineteen."

"That is my own age, and I have been sweetheart, wife, and widow in that time. Nor, truth to tell, do I confess to lack of wisdom."

"But she is bent on marrying a rascal with naught to commend him save a handsome figure and a flattering tongue."

"Small blame to her. Women have ever worshiped these qualities. What is this gallant's name and state?"

"Robert Graham, and a lawless rogue. He hunts game in what he claims to be his own woods—the woods of Dunmore in the Carse of Stirling. His uncle has tried to suppress him. But the rascal is much esteemed by the ignorant cottars, who gladly shelter him. Busy with my books, I allowed my motherless daughter every freedom. In her walks through the woods, she met this Graham, and now she is deep in love with him. And nothing will convince her of her folly."

"And is Robert Graham anxious to win her, think you?"

"When I told him I would remove her to Edinburgh, he boldly declared he would wed her though this palace were her prison and Scotland's Queen her keeper."

"If he be a lover of the right sort, that might be more than a braggart's boast," laughed the Queen.

"We will leave time to test it," said Sir Hugh grimly. "Meantime, I have brought my daughter to Edinburgh. I shall place her with an old female retainer of my house—"

"Is your daughter with you now?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"We wish to see her. Bring Margaret Raeburn hither," she said, turning to the page.

In a few minutes, Margaret Raeburn came shyly over the green lawn. The excitement of the moment was dyeing her dimpled cheeks with a becoming crimson. Womanly sweetness, womanly sympathy, were expressed in those clear, blue eyes of hers. Yet the lines of the dainty, firmly-shaped mouth proclaimed a dauntless spirit.

"My one ewe-lamb, Your Majesty," said Sir Hugh gravely, as he presented his daughter.

"Welcome to our Court, Margaret," said the Queen. "We have not seen a prettier face in Scotland yet. You must leave her with us, Sir Hugh. Such beauty befits the Court rather than the country. We have resolved to surround our person with the beautiful and the brave. And the daughter is as worthy to rank among the former as her father is among the latter."

The old Knight's face glowed to hear such praise. But Margaret Raeburn heard her monarch's flattering words with a heavy heart.

"You may leave us, Sir Hugh," said Mary Stuart, as she motioned Margaret Raeburn to sit down on the oaken bench. "Would you care to be one of our Maids of Honour?" continued the Queen to her new companion:

"I would fain be excused, Your Majesty."

"But women, not less than men, must serve Queen and country."

"My service would be so small and the joy of exemption would be so great. Much rather would I be back at the woods of Dunmore."

"Have you any special reason? Nay, do not blush. A Queen can keep a secret. And remember, I too have loved," said Mary kindly.

"Robert Graham of Dunmore has my heart. And where my heart is there would I fain be also."

"'Tis a natural wish. Is Robert Graham a comely lad?"

"None comelier."

"In your eyes, I daresay. Yet he is reported to me as disloyal."

"Who say so wrong him. Robert Graham is as loyal to you as his forefathers were to yours. So great was his gallantry that his grandfather was rewarded by your grandfather with the lands of Dunmore. Robert Graham's father died when Robert was but a child, and his uncle, gaining possession of the lands, still unlawfully holds them. Aided by his brother barons, he has resisted all my lover's efforts to recover his rights. It is for this cause my lover is fighting. Up till now he has been unsuccessful. But, for his sake, I make bold to suggest that Your Majesty could do more with your word than Robert Graham can with his sword."

"Ah, Margaret, you are a pretty pleader, but I am weary hearing of these endless quarrels. We shall postpone such matters till you are rested and refreshed."

Margaret Raeburn was committed to the care of a maid, and conducted to a room

provided for her special use. Midst its seclusion she sat down, a picture of disconsolation, and wept long and bitterly.

She was no lover of grandeur and gaiety; it was with a heavy heart she had quitted the green glades around her quiet home. Her sweetest, yet saddest, thoughts were still lingering there, and wistfully she conjured up visions of the woods of Dunmore where the lad she loved was now roaming alone, singing his love-songs to the listening leaves.

The days that followed were full of heaviness for the new Maid of Honour. The constantly changing human kaleidoscope was to her an unutterable weariness.

The French *habitués* of the Court, with their strange deportment and studied insolence, were abhorrent to the sober-minded girl. Instinctively she felt a closer kinship with the old Scottish knights who, in silence, frequented the Palace, indignantly marking their monarch's obvious preference for her foreign friends.

'Twas nearing midnight. The honest burghers of Edinburgh had retired to rest. But down at Holyrood there were abundant signs of life. Light streamed from the tiny windows; through those which stood open came sounds of revelry. Queen Mary's laugh was the merriest, her foot the lightest in the dance now proceeding in the picture gallery.

Her partner was Count Dierdot, a Frenchman of great personal charm. Accustomed to the warm emotions of the daughters of France, he had been spurred to achieve success among the beauties of Scotland. One by one they had softened under his influence. All, save Margaret Raeburn. She alone remained indifferent, contemptuous.

"Your Majesty has added another gem to the courtly diadem of beauty," said Dierdot, as he swung the Queen round in the dance.

"Be careful, Dierdot," answered Mary. "Margaret Raeburn's heart is already won."

"Who is the lucky man?"

"Some free-lance of the woods has sung his simple song into her ear, and now she treasures song and singer in her heart."

"Simple things satisfy the simple."

"May be. Yet she is happy and I am not. I would gladly leave this life with all its guilt—aye, and all its guilt—for the simple joy that is Margaret Raeburn's. Though I am footing it here as Scotland's Queen, I am far less happy than any country wench with a welcome wooer."

"Your Majesty is unwarrantably gloomy. Mean pleasures ne'er pleased a noble mind. With Margaret Raeburn it is different. She would be happier gathering nuts than governing a nation."

"Fie, Dierdot. You have fallen victim to Margaret's charms and she has flouted you. Is it not so?"

"The beauty my Queen approves I may surely admire?"

"Well, you are on a vain quest this time; You will find a vast difference between the constancy of our Scottish maids and the changeful charmers of your own gay France. Ah, me! Would that all were there who wish they were."

"Then Scotland would be the poorer of your presence."

"I fear you are right, Dierdot."

As she spoke, a strange, shrill whistle echoed without. The merry dancers heard it not. And, though the Queen was quick to note it, she would as quickly have forgotten it had she not marked its instant effect on Margaret Raeburn.

Margaret flushed guiltily and cast a swift, nervous glance round the room. Then, slowly and with ill-assumed calmness, she moved towards the door and disappeared.

Simultaneously the Queen withdrew through an opposite doorway, and hastened down a stair leading to the garden. As she descended, the whistle again sounded with increased distinctness. Throwing a cloak over her gay dress, the Queen stepped out into the shadow of the palace wall and waited. A few seconds later there passed by the cloaked and hooded figure of Margaret Raeburn.

The Queen stealthily followed her Maid till she became hid among the shadows of the lime-trees at the bottom of the garden.

Drawing nearer, Her Majesty discerned Margaret Raeburn half-hidden in the embrace of a male companion. The man was treating the maid to all the homage which the true lover traditionally delights to render. Ever and again the familiar sound of loving lips in contact fell on the listener's ears, bringing a dainty smile to the Queen's lips.

At last, as the lovers were about to part, the man raised his voice.

"To-morrow night at twelve o'clock I shall wait for you here, darling. Be ready for flight. I have arranged for our reception in the house of a friend near Craigmillar. A clergyman will be at hand to marry us. We shall then remain at Craigmillar till the

Queen's vassals have wearied hunting for us. Then secretly we shall hie home to bonny Dunmore. At present I only wish I could stand face to face with that scoundrel Dierdot. I would reward him for his insulting attentions to you. Perhaps I may meet him to-morrow. If I do," the speaker gaily concluded, "to-morrow night Dierdot will be dead, you will be wed, and the Queen will have lost her captive."

The sound of kissing followed, then Margaret Raeburn went back to the Palace, while Robert Graham climbed a tree under which they had been standing.

The Queen stood motionless while he swung from branch to branch, and, leaping on to the wall, disappeared from view. Then she hastily returned to the ballroom.

At twelve o'clock on the following night, a woman, closely wrapped, stood waiting under the shade of the Palace lime-trees.

Promptly on the stroke of the hour Robert Graham appeared on the summit of the wall, dragging a light ladder behind him. By means of it, the woman ascended one side of the wall and descended the other. Both man and woman then hurried along Croft-an-Righ to where a horse stood in readiness.

They swiftly mounted and passed slowly along by the base of Arthur's Seat, on through Dumbiedykes, and out beyond the Royal Park with constantly-increasing speed.

Few stragglers were about, and none were anxious to question a well-mounted, well-armed horseman. The lovers maintained an unbroken silence; the attendant dangers were too grave to permit of the luxury of speech. On through the darkness Robert Graham urged his steed. His one desire was to reach his destination with his precious burden without adventure of any kind.

Deep in a seemingly deserted path near Craigmillar stood a neat little cottage. Here Robert Graham halted.

"We dismount here, darling," he whispered. "I will journey on a little further and return with a minister who has promised his service."

He handed over his sweetheart to the elderly woman who had evidently been awaiting their arrival, and rode off. He was absent only a short time, but when he returned with the holy churchman, it was to find the old woman standing excitedly in the doorway.

"The lady has gone, sir," she said.

"Gone!" echoed Robert Graham incredulously.

"Yes, sir. She waited only till the sound of your horse's hoofs had died away. Then she handed me this note, and, stepping outside, disappeared in the darkness."

Robert Graham eagerly seized the note and read:

Dierdot is not dead. Margaret Raeburn is not wed. The Queen has not lost her captive. Have you the courage to come to Holyrood and ask as a favour what Mary Stuart defies you to take by fraud or force? If not, Margaret Raeburn will remain the Queen's captive. MARY STUART.

* * * * *

On the following afternoon, when the sun was bathing Scotland's ancient and picturesque capital in a flood of dazzling, golden light, Robert Graham rode down the Canon-gate.

In the Abbey Strand, to the west of the Palace, stood the White Hart Inn, as its successor stands to-day. There was no more popular resort in all the city, and the richly-bedecked courtiers, sick of the statelier department of the Palace, oftentimes joined the homelier, happier company in the White Hart.

Robert Graham dismounted at the inn door, and, entering the parlour, called for refreshment. He glanced over the company already in the room. Several of the foreign gentry attached to the Court were seated near the open window. These Robert Graham scanned with special carefulness. Among them was Count Dierdot, who now remarked contemptuously:

"When your rudeness is exhausted and your curiosity satisfied, perhaps you will confine your gaze to your own countrymen: They are more familiar with vulgar manners."

"I shall look where and how I please," said Robert Graham. "My manners may not be French. But, if yours are, I am thankful mine are not."

"I fear you are to be forgiven on the ground that you are no fit foe for a gentleman. Yet I have a mind to teach you that ignorance does not excuse insolence."

"If you are as ill-guided with your sword as with your tongue, I wonder that you have been spared to make such a brag. As it is, I am looking for one of your breed, a knave named Dierdot."

Dierdot sprang angrily to his feet.

"I am Count Dierdot, at your service here and now. What clown are you that claims the privilege of dying by Dierdot's sword?"

"I will tell you when we are alone. I

must bring in another name—a name I would not have polluted by being mentioned in such company."

Suddenly the truth flashed on the Frenchman's mind, and he burst into boisterous, insolent laughter.

"Why, gentlemen," he said, turning to his compatriots, "here is sport. This is Margaret Rae——"

Ere he could utter the name Robert Graham dashed his glass of wine into Count Dierdot's face.

"A tulzie! A tulzie!"

Within the inn and up the Canongate the familiar cry resounded, as the two men stepped out on to the Abbey Strand. Surrounded by his drunken companions, Dierdot swaggered and threatened. Amid the clamour Robert Graham stood, unmoved but quite prepared. Dierdot's reputation as a swordsman was already known to many of the onlookers, who secretly sympathised with the handsome, unassuming stranger so certainly advancing to defeat and death.

But, ere many minutes, these feelings were obliterated, and the crowd stood breathlessly watching one of the most brilliant displays of swordsmanship the Canongate had ever seen.

Every feint and pass was tried, but each man proved his familiarity with it by the deftness with which he met it. Tireless in arm and eye, Robert Graham waited for the chance he was sure would come.

His confidence justified itself. Exasperated that the easy victory he had anticipated should be so long deferred, Dierdot became suddenly aggressive. Lunging forward, he managed to graze his opponent's cheek and send the blood streaming down his face. But, in that moment, life or death was concentrated into a few lightning passes, and Count Dierdot reeled backwards with a death-like pallor on his face.

"Way for the Queen! Make way for the Queen!" rose high above the instant din.

A gay cavalcade was passing down the Canongate towards the Palace, preceded by the men-at-arms.

"What attracts the crowd?" asked the Queen, as she approached, followed by her Maids of Honour.

Robert Graham was now offering resistance to Dierdot's companions, who were bent on avenging the defeat.

"Sheath every sword" rang out the imperious voice of Mary Stuart.

She was instantly obeyed. But, at the same moment, a loud, heartrending cry

burst from Margaret Raeburn's lips. In the lone, friendless man she had recognised the lad she loved.

The fainting girl reeled from her horse, but not before her lover had sprung forward and received her in his arms as she fell.

"May I keep what I have caught?" he said, turning with his burden to the Queen.

"Robert Graham," said the astonished monarch, as she recognised her companion in the previous night's adventure. "You have indeed a stout heart to kill a Queen's favourite and beg a Queen's favour in the same moment."

"'Tis part of the task you dared me to perform. I have sought my bride through disappointment and danger. Will not Your Majesty now be gracious and set your captive free?"

"What say you, Margaret?" asked the Queen. "Remember, the arm that now incircles you may one day seem more intolerable than the bonds he wishes me to break."

"I have no fear," said the blushing girl. "Your Majesty has loved, and knows that true love never chafes at its chains."

"Your wish is granted then."

The Royal cavalcade moved on to the Palace. Within a few hours the priest had united Robert Graham and Margaret Raeburn in holy wedlock.

After the ceremony the Queen and her retinue attended bridegroom and bride to the Palace gates.

"For his sweet wife's sake the lands of Dunmore will be speedily returned to their lawful lord," whispered Mary to her late Maid of Honour, ere she was raised to the saddle. "Take the word of a Queen on it. But tell me, Robert Graham, whither do you journey to-night?"

"To a certain cottage near to Craigmillar that Your Majesty knows of."

Mary Stuart smiled.

"The trick I played last night may well be forgiven in the joy of to-night."

"It shall be my proudest boast that in my arms I have carried a Queen."

"No lip loyalty, Robert Graham," laughed Her Majesty. "Well you know that your pride in carrying off a Queen is naught to your pride in carrying off the Queen's captive. But God's blessing rest on you both, and farewell."

With a parting cheer from the assembled courtiers, bridegroom and bride rode off, and soon were lost to view amid the gathering shadows of the Summer night.

True Detective Stories. ❧ ❧

❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ By M. F. GORON.

(Late Chief of the Paris Detective Police.)

Edited by ALBERT KEYZER. ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

These thrilling stories relate true incidents in the career of M. Goron—in fact, they are actual extracts from the pages of the diary which he kept while engaged in the duties of his profession. M. Goron has taken the very keenest interest in preparing the stories for press. They now, for the first time, appear in print. Each story is complete in itself.

VII.—Fighting the Ghosts.

I HAD dined at the house of Madame A——, the widow of an old friend, and was about to leave, when she whispered: "Don't go; I want to speak to you. Have you seen my brother Xavier of late?"

"No. Why?"

"Then you know nothing of his impending marriage?"

"Not a word. Who is the fortunate lady?"

"Don't joke; the matter is serious. I want your advice, and, Heaven knows, probably your help. Something strange has happened to him. Within the last fortnight I had noticed his haggard looks; and, after questioning him several times, he informed me that he intended to marry Mademoiselle Germaine E——, a girl barely eighteen; and he, as you know, is forty-three. He refused to enter into any explanations; and cut my questions short with the remark that he was compelled to marry her. And when, a few days later, I once more referred to the subject, he went away, and I have not seen him since."

"I am sorry for you," I retorted, "but Xavier is not the first man who makes a fool of himself in that way. He is very much of age, and probably very much in love. I, therefore, do not see where I can be of any use to you or to him."

"I tell you there is a mystery about this that scares me. Xavier's eyes looked haunted; I never saw such an expression on anyone's face. For our old friendship's sake, find out what is at the bottom of it all."

"My dear friend," I retorted, "there is nothing in what you tell me to show that your fears are justified; but, since you appeal to our old friendship, I will see Xavier on the matter."

I had known Xavier for some years. He was a good-natured, easy-going, immensely rich fellow, who had idled through life; interested in horses, but too lazy and indolent to have a racing stable. He never cared for women's society, and had a rooted aversion to marriage. That he, the misogynist, should have fallen in love was quite possible; I had seen that kind of thing occur before. But Xavier with a troubled face meant something out of the common.

I was not long gathering a few interesting facts. For the last six months Xavier had ceased to frequent his favourite club, and he, a great whist-player, had deserted the card-table. But a more alarming symptom was that he had taken up spiritualism. How that came about no one could tell me, and as his former friends were sceptical on that score, he had cut them all.

My next step was to learn what I could about Germaine E——, the girl Xavier intended to marry; and this is what I heard:

She was born in Vermont, U.S., of French parents, who had died, leaving her in charge of a farmer's family. M. E——, her father's brother, a large ironfounder in Toulouse, being childless, wrote over to these farmers to say that he and his wife would adopt the orphan; and the money for the journey

having been sent, Germaine, then in her fourteenth year, arrived in France. The girl was woefully ignorant, and uncouth in her manner, but, being remarkably intelligent, soon became very accomplished.

Despite her brilliant qualities, her uncle and aunt regretted having adopted her. She showed herself self-willed, headstrong; had violent scenes with her relatives, who left her at boarding-school until she was seventeen; and as she had a talent for painting, they were glad to send her to Paris to study her art. She boarded with two old ladies in the Avenue Kléber, who were compelled to let her come and go as she pleased, without daring to remonstrate with her.

For three nights I read works on spiritualism, and when I had crammed into my head as much as it could conveniently hold on that subject, I went in search of Xavier.

At one time I could have found him any hour of the day; but with all his habits changed it was no easy matter; and I dared not call at his house for fear of arousing his suspicion. I discovered that every Wednesday night he dined at a little restaurant near the Montparnasse Station. I went there early and took my seat in a quiet corner. It was a queer place; patronised by gentlemen of the spirit-rapping fraternity.

It was getting late, and I was beginning to fear I should miss Xavier, when he came in and sat down at a table near me. He gave a quick glance round the room, but did not recognise me. I certainly noticed a great change in him. His careless expression had disappeared. And now and then he would draw his fingers through his hair, a thing altogether new to me.

"Hallo, old chap!" I called out to him.

He turned round and stared at me in surprise.

"Hallo, Goron, what brings you here?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I am here on a rather funny errand. Come with me to the *café* at the corner, where we can talk. Perhaps you can give me some information."

A quarter of an hour later, when we were seated opposite one another, I began:

"What I am going to say to you must remain between ourselves. Is this understood?"

"Perfectly."

"The fact is, I'm in a bit of a fix. For the last three months I have been investigating a very difficult case, without being able

to find the slightest clue. Yesterday I was on the point of giving it up in despair, when I remembered that one of my foreign colleagues had, through the help of a medium, obtained some valuable information that put him on the right trail. I decided to make a final attempt, and went to that little restaurant, where I hoped to meet a man who, I know, is well versed in these matters. My man did not turn up, but, fortunately I saw you, and possibly you may assist me."

"Look here, Goron," he cried, with an excitement such as I should not have thought was in his nature, "I can and will help you. Strictly between ourselves, I have gone in for spiritualism. I have a splendid medium for you, a man called Boissier, who assists me in my researches. He is now, I dare say, waiting for me at the restaurant. I will bring him here."

"Hold hard, Xavier!" I cried. "I shall be delighted to make the acquaintance of your friend, Boissier. You must, however, remember that it will never do for me, the Chief of the Detective Police, to let a stranger know that I have recourse to the occult sciences to detect crime: The comic papers would make fine sport of me. Since you kindly offer to help me, only you and I must know of it. But, if you like, you can introduce me to M. Boissier under another name, always supposing he does not know me by sight."

"There is no fear of that," cried Xavier. "Boissier has been all his life abroad, and returned to France only some six months ago. I'll fetch him."

A moment later Xavier came back, accompanied by a clean-shaven man with a large face. My friend introduced me as M. Martin from Bordeaux, and I had the pleasure of shaking M. Boissier's fat, flabby hand.

I alleged an engagement and soon took my leave, after having made an appointment with Xavier for the following day.

When we met, Xavier informed me that Boissier would put himself at my disposal if I wanted to hold any intercourse with the other world.

"Boissier," he added, "is a wonderful chap. I have the greatest confidence in him, and, through him, you will, I am sure, arrive at good results." Suddenly he turned to me with the question:

"Have you heard I am getting married?"

"No. I have no time to go into society:

Let me congratulate you. Who is the lady?"

He remained silent a moment, ran his fingers through his hair, and remarked:

"Her name is Germaine E—. Since you are interested in spiritualism I want you to make her acquaintance. You will find her an accomplished girl. She is young, very young—too young for me," he added in almost a whisper.

I eyed my friend narrowly, and dared not question him, for I felt I was nearing the secret. But he shook his head, and as we walked together in the direction of his house, we did not exchange a word. On reaching his door I wished him good-night, when he seized my arm and called out:

"Come in; I want to talk to you."

We went into his smoking-room, and his valet had hardly closed the door when he exclaimed:

"Goron, don't go in for spiritualism. The human mind cannot stand it. Mine is giving way under the strain."

And then I saw in his eyes the haunted look that had scared his sister.

I put my hand on his shoulder, and said soothingly:

"I see you are fearfully worried. You know you can trust me."

With his eyes half shut, as if in a trance, he spoke so rapidly that I had trouble to follow him.

"Goron, the future has been revealed to me. I have heard voices, and they told me what would happen. I will perform great deeds, with the help of a woman, my wife, and her name is Germaine E—. Evil influences are at work against me, but I will escape them, thanks to that woman. She, too, has heard the same voices, and must obey their injunctions."

Xavier paused a moment; wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and continued in a quieter tone:

"Were it not for these mysterious commands, I would never marry that girl, in every way unsuited to me. But it is the decree of Fate. Next week our banns will be published."

I had come prepared for something of the sort; but this was much more serious than I had expected, and I began to wonder how much villainy I should detect before I came to the bottom of the affair.

To reason with a man, apparently under a kind of spell, would have been folly. I therefore refrained from comment, and said:

"I know of cases where people, having

misunderstood the words of the spirits, have tested the accuracy of their commands by other means. Suppose we, too, make another test?"

Xavier, who had been nervously pacing up and down the room, stopped in front of me.

"No," he cried; "I have applied a test, and one that will put even your doubts to rest. On the advice of a friend I went to a famous fortune-teller, and the first thing I heard from her was that I would marry Germaine. Don't smile, Goron. Like you, I have always been sceptical of palmists and *tutti quanti*. But I heard of another well-known soothsayer in Lyons; and when I called on her she told me the identical thing. I even went to Amsterdam, to a woman whose address had been given me; and the result was the same. Can you wonder when I say that influences are at work?"

"Yes, Xavier," I cried; "you are right: Influences are at work; but you and I will prove stronger than they!"

Poor Xavier, who, of course, did not understand the meaning of my words, gazed at me in astonishment, and said:

"I want you to meet Germaine. Will you dine with us to-morrow night at Voisin's, at eight o'clock?"

"With pleasure. But remember that as I, too, want to consult the spirits, I must, for the next few days, remain M. Martin, for your *fiancée* as well as for your friend Boissier."

"Very well. I promise not to make a mistake." In a bitter tone, he added: "My *fiancée*, as you see, is emancipated, and does not object to dining with me in a restaurant without a chaperon."

As I alighted at Voisin's a brougham drove up with Xavier, Boissier, and Mlle. Germaine; the latter a slim, pale girl, with a curious way of looking at people from the corners of her grey eyes.

She spoke very little, nor was Xavier in a mood to talk. Boissier, on the other hand, was in great form; and never left off addressing everybody, including the waiters. He seemed to have taken a great liking to me, and, slapping me on the back, said:

"Martin, I shall be delighted to assist you if you want any advice from the other world."

"That is awfully good of you," I replied. "The sooner the better, as I want to get back to Bordeaux."

We arranged to meet the following afternoon at his apartment in the Rue Bleue; and, at his request, Germaine promised to come, too.

"She is wonderful!" remarked Boissier. "She seems to command the spirits!"

Xavier and I saw Germaine home, and we walked a little way together.

"How long have you known Boissier?" I asked.

"About six months."

"Was it through him you made Mlle. Germaine's acquaintance?"

"Yes. I saw her the first time at the *séance* of the S.S. Society, where Boissier had taken me."

"Do you mind giving me the name of the fortune-teller you consulted here in Paris?"

Xavier hesitated a moment.

"Mademoiselle Clémentine is her name."

"The woman in the Avenue Trudaine?"

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"No; I know of her." And with that I wished him good-night.

When I called at the Rue Bleue, Germaine was sitting in a listless attitude on the sofa. Boissier was as boisterous as ever.

"Come on Pythonissa," he shouted to the girl; "mount your Tripus, our friend Martin is in a hurry."

Germaine sat down at the table, placed a piece of paper in front of her, took up a pencil, and looked at me from the corners of her eyes, whilst Boissier held his hands over her head. Having remained a minute in that position, he beckoned to me to come close up to him, and whispered:

"Put your question!"

"I would like to know," I said, "where Maillard, who died a year ago, hid the documents for which his relatives are searching."

Germaine, her eyes half-closed, began to write slowly, and I read: "In a black bag."

"Where is the bag?" I asked.

Again the pencil moved and wrote: "In the garden."

"Go on with your questions," said Boissier.

"No, thank you," I retorted; "you have given me most valuable information; and I can act upon that."

The banns of Xavier's marriage were to be published on the 13th; it was already the 6th, and I shuddered when I thought how little time was left to me to sift this business.

I went home and traced my plan. The investigations I had to make would take me away from Paris fully three days; and there remained, therefore, only another three days to put into execution the scheme which I trusted would bring everything to light.

During my absence I had Boissier and Germaine watched. On my return I learnt that the latter had met Xavier twice, but otherwise had not called anywhere nor received visitors, with the exception of Boissier, who had gone to her house and stayed there half-an-hour.

Boissier, on the other hand, had been very busy. He had met Xavier every day; he had spent an evening at Mlle. Clémentine's private residence at Suresnes. He had also been seen in earnest conversation with two ladies, who proved to be connected with Clémentine's establishment. Moreover, he had dined with an individual called Rivière, who occupied a bedroom above Boissier's apartment. This Rivière had once been arrested on a charge of embezzlement, but had been discharged.

My scheme was not only a risky one, but wanted elaborate preparation. I started early by calling on a bachelor friend, and obtained his permission to use his apartment in the Place Valois for the following afternoon. At my request, he also instructed his housekeeper, an elderly woman, to place herself at my disposal. From there I went to Xavier.

"Keep yourself free to-morrow," I said; "I will call for you at two o'clock."

"What for?" he asked.

"I will tell you that later. I do not intend to waste your valuable time; nor can I afford to lose mine. I suppose you can trust me?"

"All right," he sighed; "I'll wait for you."

I then drove to the Rue Bleue, and caught Boissier just as he was leaving the house. When he saw me he held out both hands.

"What cheer, Martin?"

"I am glad I caught you: Professor Leroy, the well-known spiritualist from Brussels, is here. He has invited me to a private *séance*, and allows me to bring a few friends. Xavier is coming; and I want you to give us the pleasure of your company."

"Leroy, Leroy," he replied; "I never heard that name. But if Xavier comes I will join your party."

"I am sure you will enjoy it. Here is the address. Three o'clock sharp."

At the Avenue Kléber, Mlle. Germaine told me she had a bad cold, but would wrap up well and assist at the *séance*.

As I left her house, I heard my name called, and a carriage stopped a few yards from me. I recognised Mme. A—, Xavier's sister.

"My dear Goron," she cried, in an anxious tone, "how is it I have not heard from you? Have you forgotten your promise?"

"I have forgotten nothing. In order to help your brother I have even embarked on a strange adventure. Hitherto I have had to do with living men; now I am fighting ghosts."

"My dear friend, please don't make fun of me. You do not know how worried I am about Xavier."

"I give you my word I am speaking the truth. Ghosts have been bluffing your brother, and they tried the same experiment on me, giving me news from the other world of a man who never died, because he was never born. There are, apparently, two kinds of spirits: those who come to the aid of criminals; and others, of a more respectable class, who side with the detectives. I have already been introduced to the former; and to-morrow I hope to meet some friendly ghosts, who will stand by me like colleagues. Don't stare at me, Madame. It all sounds very strange, but I exaggerate nothing. If all goes well I invite myself to dine with you to-morrow night, and you may then hear a queer story. *Au revoir!*"

The next day I found Xavier more peevish than usual. I pretended not to notice this, and when his brougham drove up to the Place Valois, I said:

"Xavier, I have invited you to a funny performance. Promise me to keep your nerves under control, and not to utter a word during the *séance* until I give you leave. On my part I promise you that, in all probability, you will sleep better to-night than you have for the last three months. Is it understood?"

He nodded assent; and I knew I could trust him.

When we reached the Place Valois, Professor Leroy was arranging the dining-room where the *séance* was to be held.

We waited in the drawing-room for Germaine and Boissier, who arrived within five minutes of each other; and we

then followed the Professor to the dining-room. The blinds had been drawn, the curtains closed, and only a small light behind a green glass on the mantelpiece shone through the semi-darkness.

Leroy bade Xavier and Germaine sit down in one corner of the room, and Boissier and me in the opposite one.

"You will," he began, "witness some extraordinary manifestations. Some of the phenomena may even be of a startling nature, for I am the first man who has succeeded in making persons communicate direct with departed spirits, without passing through the hands of a medium. The experiment is a difficult one, and its success depends entirely on the relations that have existed between the questioner and the spirit evoked."

Addressing me, he continued:

"Monsieur, I shall begin with you. Please think of a departed person with whom you wish to speak."

"I have thought of one," I replied.

The Professor laid one hand on my right shoulder, and, raising the other in the air, uttered a few words in a weird-sounding tongue. We waited a minute, but no response came.

The same experiment was tried with Xavier and Boissier, but with no better results.

"I do not know how to account for this," said the Professor in a vexed tone. "I have never yet seen the spirits so hostile. I shall now ask Mademoiselle to recall someone with whom she would like to converse."

"I have done so," said Germaine.

The Professor then laid his hand on her shoulder; but the moment he lifted the other a noise burst upon us as if all Bedlam had been let loose. It only lasted a few seconds, but it made our bones leap.

"Good Heavens, what was that?" asked Xavier.

"I don't know," said the Professor; "this is quite new to me. We shall soon see."

He again touched Germaine, and once more the deafening din arose, worse than before.

Xavier and Germaine, looking very scared, rose from their seats, when the Professor stopped them.

"Sit down," he shouted. "Hark, the spirits are there; I can hear them!"

After a silence that seemed oppressive, we heard a low moan in the distance,

which grew louder as it came nearer. When it had reached our room it stopped. There was another minute of suspense, and then a voice, very far off, called out: "Lily, Lily!"

Germaine started. She was deathly pale. Again the voice was heard, but much nearer:

"Lily! Lily! Why have you done this?"

Germaine was shaking so that I thought she would drop. Then she cried:

"Forgive me, forgive me, Germaine; I promise I will atone!"

Boissier jumped up to go towards her. I seized his wrist, and whispered in his ear:

"I am not Martin; my name is Goron. If you make a move or utter a sound, you are lost!"

The *séance* broke up in a state of excitement. Xavier conducted the half-fainting Germaine to the drawing-room, and delivered her to the care of the old housekeeper, who opened her dress, and sprinkled her face with water. After a hysterical fit of crying she felt better.

I went in to her and said:

"Mademoiselle, I suppose you would like to speak to us now?"

"Yes," she replied; "call your friend Xavier, but not Boissier."

She shuddered as she mentioned the name.

I returned to the dining-room.

"Professor," I said, "keep close to that fellow Boissier till I come back. If he tries any nonsense clap the handcuffs on him."

"I'll look after him, sir," laughed the Professor.

Germaine was sitting in an easy-chair, with her eyes closed, whilst Xavier walked about excitedly.

"What does it all——"

"Hush!" I interrupted him; "you will hear the truth now."

Suddenly Germaine went on her knees before Xavier, and seizing one of his hands, exclaimed:

"I have deceived you! Forgive me!"

Beckoning Xavier to remain silent, I raised the girl from the floor, and said:

"Whom is he to forgive? Is it Germaine or——"

"No," she shrieked, in a paroxysm of grief. "Don't speak, I will tell everything!"

And in broken sentences, mingled with sobs, she poured out her story:

"My name is Lily Bradley, and I am the daughter of the farmers who took

charge of Germaine when her parents died. My father and mother were very good to her; but Germaine was sickly, and the doctor said she could not live long. Then came the letter of M. E—— in Toulouse, proposing to adopt his niece, and my parents, being poor, decided to let me take her place. I begged them not to do this, but I was only thirteen, and they pressed me so hard that I consented. Two years later Germaine died and——"

"Your parents committed a second fraud. by burying her under your name," I said.

"How on earth, Goron, did you——"

"Keep quiet, Xavier. Please go on, Miss Lily."

"Some time after that my parents died, too, when one day I received a visit from that man, Boissier. My father knew him, and I remember him saying the fellow was a scoundrel. Somehow or other Boissier had got hold of my secret, and he threatened to denounce me unless I consented to assist him in a plot.

"He had become intimate with M. Xavier; and the plan was that I should marry M. Xavier, and afterwards pay Boissier a large sum of money. 'He is rich,' the latter used to say; 'I want some of his money.' If M. Xavier had not gone in for spiritualism, this conspiracy would never have been started. Several times I have felt tempted to write him an anonymous letter warning him against the plot; but Boissier terrorised me, and I dared not risk it. I have also——"

She stopped, and an expression of intense pain came over her face.

I saw she was really ill; and as, for several reasons, I did not want her to go back to where she was staying, I sent for a cab and asked the housekeeper to take my card, and convey the girl to a home, managed by one of my friends, who would look after her.

Boissier was sitting motionless in the dining-room by the side of the "Professor," who was reading a morning paper.

"Take him to the Prefecture, Leroy," I said. "I will see him to-night, or to-morrow morning."

"Yes, sir. Come along, my boy, you and I will look at a few more ghosts."

And he led away Boissier, who shivered with fright, and had not the strength to utter a syllable.

"Well, Xavier," I exclaimed, when we were alone. "What do you think of our *séance*? Rather stormy, was it not?"

"Goron, I am too much ashamed of myself to dare even to thank you. I feel in a dream. But how did you ferret it all out? What clue did you have?"

"Oh, I had a clue. But there is your sister worrying herself to death. Go at once to her, and tell her she need not trouble to order a wedding-cake for you. One word more. Ask your sister to tell her butler to bring up a bottle of Mouton Rothschild. I promised to dine with her and you—if all went well."

It was one of the pleasantest dinners I can remember. The Mouton Rothschild had been religiously emptied. We three were smoking cigarettes, when Xavier said:

"And now tell us what gave you the clue to the affair?"

"My dear Xavier, you will see it is all very simple. If people would believe only half the things told them in the course of their lives, there would be only half the number of crimes committed. You need not look uncomfortable; others have been taken in like you.

"Your case is divided into two parts. The first, which concerns you specially, is of childish simplicity. It was all a fake. The voices you heard, calling upon you to marry that girl, did not emanate from spirits. Candidly, I am surprised a man of your intellect should have fallen into such a vulgar trap. As to these wonderful soothsayers in Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam, they were all members of the same gang. It was Boissier who gave you the addresses of these sibyls, and Clémentine, warned by Boissier, sent one of her staff to the place to receive you. I shall take that lady in hand, I promise you.

"The second part of your case, relating more particularly to the girl, was more subtle, and, I own, gave me some trouble. She, I felt, was the pivot of the affair, and on her I centred my attention. Her hands were my first clue. In a suspicious case I suspect everything, especially that which is supposed to be true.

"Here was a girl, the daughter of French parents, with a pair of American peasant's hands! I have been to the States and have noticed the peculiarities of the hands in that country, as elsewhere. Her hands haunted me, until, by a freak of imagination, I began to fancy they did not belong to her. And that was my starting-point.

"I went to Toulouse, saw M. E—— and

Madame E——, who had adopted their niece, and had a profitable talk with them: They showed me the portraits of Germaine's parents, true types of the Latin race; and I learnt from them that the Bradleys, the farmers, who at one time took charge of Germaine, also had a little daughter. On my return to Paris I communicated by telegram with the American authorities, and with admirable courtesy they replied the second day that Lily Bradley had died, and her parents were also dead.

"The conviction then stole upon me that your *fiancée* was not Germaine, but the farmers' child; and my only way to test the truth was to organise a *séance*, and—without a play upon words—turn the tables upon those who used spiritualism to swindle you. You saw what happened. Leroy is one of my men. His father was a low comedian, who taught his son ventriloquism.

"As to that terrible noise you heard, it is produced by smearing two little planks with rosin, and rubbing them violently against one another. I saw the thing done in South America at an electioneering meeting. I had placed a man in one of the cupboards and he produced that horrible din. And this is all. It is the first time I have gone in for spiritualism, and I am sure it will be the last."

Xavier and I had a violent dispute about the wretched Boissier. Early the next morning my friend called on me, and told me that this matter could not go further, on account of the "scandal." How I hate that word! How many crimes have, within my knowledge, remained unpunished, because the victims, belonging to the higher classes, dreaded what they termed the "scandal." Madame A——, too, came to the rescue, and, to my sorrow, I had to let the fellow go.

For all that, vengeance overtook Boissier. When he returned home, the man Rivière had broken open his trunk, stolen all his money, and disappeared.

Two years later I recognised Boissier among a lot of vagabonds the police had found huddled together in a shed near the Central Markets. He had become a horrible wreck.

M. E—— and his wife took charge of Lily Bradley. As they told me afterwards, the girl had sinned, but had also been sinned against. Having once befriended her, they would not throw her upon the world.

(Next month will appear another story in this series: "A Dramatic Holiday.")

Driscoll's Lions. * * *

* * * By ALICE and CLAUDE ASKEW.

The story of a circus proprietor's terrifying ordeal.

"THE boy too ill to go on to-night? Rubbish, Nan! He's lazy, that's what it is, and he wants a touch of the rope!"

Andrew Driscoll—"Long Andrew," as he was called, by reason of his height and inordinate length of limb—glanced down angrily at his pretty wife, a mere slip of a girl, immature in figure as she was in years.

"A touch of the rope," he repeated; "that will bring him to his senses."

"Ted's not up to it, Andrew. You may take my word," returned the girl timidly. She was afraid of her husband, though she admired him. "It ain't safe; I give you fair warning. Nero has been skulking in a corner the last day or two, and not taking his food regular."

"Nero's all right," growled the man, "and only needs a little management. Ted knows him, and he knows Ted. Besides, I won't have a son of mine shirking his work, and that's what Ted is always doing, mooning about and reading silly books instead of attending to business. If he's no good with the lions I might as well break up the whole show. There's Granger Tuke ready to pay money down for the six beasts. Been following me about for the last two months, he has, and hanged if I haven't been almost tempted to let him have 'em. What with a son who hasn't got no soul for the work he's been brought up in, and getting on in years myself, and the business not being what it was, there's not half the profits in the show as there used to be, and sometimes I am fair sick of it."

All of which was not strictly true. "Driscoll's Great Circus Combination" still drew crowded audiences wherever its proprietor chose to pitch his tent. Andrew Driscoll had been a showman all his life, as had his father before him, and the traveling circus which he conducted had gained a certain reputation for itself in the provinces, to the smaller towns of which it paid periodical visits.

Andrew Driscoll had married late in life, and his wife had died soon after, leaving him with an only child, the boy called Ted, now some fifteen or sixteen years old. Quite recently the showman had taken to himself a second wife, a girl still in her teens, whom he had admired for her intrepid horsemanship in the arena.

She was a poor little soul who had drifted somehow into circus-land; but she had taken to the profession with keen zest, and had become one of the most valuable members of the little company.

She was quite fearless—it was that which had endeared her especially in Andrew Driscoll's eyes. There was nothing that she was not ready to attempt, however hazardous the new trick might be. She had flown a parachute, she had looped the loop, she had walked the slack wire without a net beneath her. But now that she was Andrew Driscoll's wife he had put a stop to all this, loss as it was to him, perhaps because his love for her was even deeper than his love of gain. Many a time he had spoken of retiring from the business altogether, and it was not in vain that Granger Tuke had been following him with offers of purchase.

The Driscoll Circus possessed six fine lions, of which Andrew was intensely proud. Lion-taming had been his special branch, and he had been brought up to the work from childhood. He was fearless in the management of the beasts himself, and he could not understand that his son should display any nervousness in following, as was only right, in his footsteps.

Yet, unfortunately, so it was, for Ted Driscoll had neither the nerve nor the stamina of his father. He was weak of body, too, though prettily proportioned, looking almost like a girl when he entered the arena or the cage, equipped for his part of the show.

This was all very well in its way, but Andrew Driscoll would have preferred his

son to be sturdy and lusty as he was himself. And so, perhaps with the intention of attaining this end, and without real malice, he was wont to set the boy to harder tasks than he was able to accomplish, and to flog him mercilessly for failing in them. He had been flogged himself, so he argued, and it had made a man of him. Ted would be none the worse for it in the long run.

But Ted's strength did not increase, in spite of this treatment. On the contrary, he grew more sickly, his shoulders narrower, his chest more hollow, his colour preternaturally bright. Driscoll somehow never realised that the taint of consumption—the disease which had carried off the boy's mother—might have fallen upon the son. There was no one to warn him, and perhaps he would have scoffed at the idea had it even been suggested.

Ted had been trained from his earliest years to the management of the lions, and now it was his especial duty to put them through their performance, entering their cage, his long whip in hand, and forcing them to obey the word of command. He was always "billed" largely as the "Boy Lion Tamer," and Andrew Driscoll, in introducing him to the audience, would tell exaggerated tales of the boy's prowess, dwelling particularly upon the great danger to which he daily submitted himself.

Ted Driscoll hated the whole thing with an exceeding great hate. He loathed the garish lights of the circus, the braying band that always ceased to play when he made his appearance, the eager, excited faces of the audiences—folk who paid their money to see him risk his life. He loathed all this, and more particularly he loathed the great, tawny beasts that unwillingly obeyed him—poor, puny, thing as he was—degrading their natures, lowering themselves, as it seemed to him, to his own mean level.

And he was afraid. That was the worst of it—the most constant source of danger. His courage was a pretence—a sham—and the haunting dread of his mind was lest some day the lions themselves should realise the truth, and fall upon him, as they undoubtedly might.

He was afraid. Day by day he entered the cage, shuddering and sick at heart, adopting a bravado of manner that was foreign to him, a tone of voice which he hardly recognised as his own, and so far he had been successful in concealing his real feelings.

Once he had spoken to his father, begging to be allowed to do something else—to

take some other part in the nightly performance. He was a fair acrobat, he understood trick riding. But Andrew Driscoll had burst out into a fury of rage, and had thrashed him so thoroughly that he had never again ventured to make protest.

He was by nature a gentle, nervous boy, utterly unsuited to his environment. He was fond of books, and with better health might have been useful in a city office. He was out of his element; that was the tragedy of it.

Driscoll's girl wife essayed another protest. She was fond of her stepson, and perhaps realised in a vague fashion something of the truth.

"Just for to-night, Andrew," she urged. "The boy is feelin' faint, and don't seem able to pull himself together. I don't know what is wrong with him, but he told me"—she hesitated, half afraid to admit what the boy had actually said—"he told me just now that he didn't feel sure of himself, that he couldn't do it. Yes, Andrew, he said he couldn't do it." She glanced up anxiously into the man's face. "Couldn't you?" she insinuated, "just for once? The lions are all right with you, and it wouldn't affect the show—no, not a bit."

"Wouldn't it?" he shouted, clenching his bony fingers together. "What do you think the audience expect? Isn't it the boy lion-tamer that they come to see? And if they don't have their money's worth we may as well shut up shop. If Ted don't do as he has got to, I'll have a word with him myself. Tell him that, and now go—I am busy."

Nancy Driscoll stole away, for she knew it was useless to argue with her husband. She was not very acute of intellect, and she could not understand the boy's terror of his daily task. If he were ill it would be a different matter, but he had not appeared to be particularly ill when he had made his halting confidence to her. It was not indeed illness that he had urged, though she had made this the basis of her appeal. He had merely clung to her hand, and protested that he was frightened, that he had always been frightened, that he was sure he would break down, and then what would the consequences be?

"I feel it more to-day than ever," he had moaned, "and I can't do it, Nan, I can't. Father must flog me, that's all. He can't tear the life out of me as the lions would."

Upon which Nan had made her protest to her husband—a protest which she had felt

foredoomed to failure. This fact she announced to Ted in due course.

Later in the afternoon Ted had the misfortune to fall in his father's way. He had been down to the circus to look at the lions whose cage was already fixed up in the place it was wont to occupy during the performance. It was screened off from the rest of the arena by means of a curtain which was merely drawn when the great turn of the evening began. The lion-tamer entered the cage from the back and so made his appearance directly among the animals.

Andrew Driscoll was in the arena engaged in superintending the final touches which were being put to the seating accommodation; advance booking had been good, and he expected the audience to be a large one. Nevertheless he was ill-tempered and swore loudly at the workmen; never had they seemed to him so clumsy. Suddenly he turned his head and caught sight of his son.

"Ted," he shouted, "come here."

The boy obeyed, dragging his feet a little. His head felt like a piece of lead, and he had been coughing badly only a few minutes before. His cough had been growing worse lately, but he, like everyone else, had attached no importance to it.

"Are you ill?" The man spoke in peremptory tones.

"No, father. Not what I can call exactly ill—"

"Then what's the meaning of the yarn Nan's been spinning me? You don't want to do your turn to-night, eh? Why not? I should like to know why not?"

"I don't know, father," replied the boy helplessly. "I can't explain it, but I feel uncertain like."

"Funking, eh? After all this time, too! Give way to that once and you'll never go among the lions again. I won't have it—do you hear?—I won't have it. What's that you've got there?" Andrew Driscoll snatched a book from under the boy's arm and hurled it violently away. "Reading when there's work to be done!" he growled. "Now mark you, you do your turn to-night—every bit of it—head in Nero's mouth and all—or I'll know the reason why. And now be off and help Bates with the trapeze ropes."

Ted did not dare to remonstrate. He turned away, and Andrew Driscoll could not see the pink flush that shot the boy's cheeks, nor the tears that glittered in the weak blue eyes.

The show was well attended that night.

The great circus was crowded from floor to roof. There were to be but two performances, and the fame of Driscoll's lions had preceded them. The dauntless boy tamer, too—everyone had heard of him, and great posters had flaunted their record of his marvelous deeds. Certainly he was the star of the evening, and it was to see him risk his life that this crowd had assembled.

Andrew Driscoll—he was playing the part of ring-master—glanced at his audience well content. "And the boy wanted to shirk," he muttered. "Hasn't he got no pride in him?"

Nan had been applauded for her riding, and this applause always put Driscoll into a good temper. He was proud of his girl-wife, and liked to know that others appreciated her talent. He felt more kindly disposed towards his son.

"I'll talk to him to-morrow," he promised himself, "and see what really ails him. But he mustn't give way to funk—that I can't have—not anyway."

Of course, the lions constituted the last turn of the evening. There was a little pause before the curtain was removed from the great cage, and it was during this interval that Nan, still in her riding habit, spoke a few words in her husband's ear.

"Can't we put up something else to-night, Andrew? I mean it, straight. The boy's ready, but he looks like a ghost. He'll never go through with it. And Nero—I've just had a look at Nero."

The man swore roundly, all his irritability returning. He would not be thwarted, it was against his nature. He swung his arm round in the direction of the audience.

"They've all come to see 'im," he muttered, "and see 'im they shall."

Nan turned very pale, and bit her thin lip, then, without another word, she moved away.

The curtain was drawn back, and the lions exposed to view—six magnificent beasts, full grown and fierce of aspect.

As the lurid circus light fell upon him, one sprang to his feet, and walked majestically to the front, his head craned forward, his mane quivering, his tail lashing his flanks. His great, dripping lips parted in a snarling grin, and he gave vent to a menacing roar, long-drawn and terrifying, a protest, as it seemed, against his subjection to the foolish whims of man. There was an utter disdain in the sound, and there were those among the onlookers who, hearing it, felt themselves small and weak.

"Gracious, what a savage brute! If he

were to get free! There ain't never goin' to be a boy go in that den? It's wicked, that's what I call it."

"It's all right," others spoke reassuringly. "Only a fake—all that row. They're trained to do it—just for effect."

"Down, Nero—down!" Andrew Driscoll struck at the great paws, protruded through the bars, with the iron weapon he was accustomed to hold—then, as if to reassure his audience, he stretched out his hand and stroked the tawny mane. But Nero turned sullenly away. There was something in the animal's eyes that made Andrew himself nervous for a moment, then he told himself that he was a fool to be influenced by a woman's fears, and, without further hesitation, began to speak the preliminary words with which he was wont to open the performance.

It was a trite speech, adapted to the occasion, full of exaggeration and false statement. It set forth the history of the lions, dwelt on their ferocity and uncertainty of temper, enlarged upon the danger of the lion-tamer's art. Andrew Driscoll knew the words fluently from long use, but to-day more than once he faltered and repeated himself. What if there should be more truth in what he was saying than he had ever fancied?

He came to the end of his speech. There was a shout of applause, and the band struck a few notes of a jerky waltz tune. Then there fell a hush; Andrew Driscoll knew that this hush heralded the appearance of the boy tamer in the cage. He gripped the iron firmly in his hand, and turned, a smile of encouragement for his son upon his lips.

The smile faded away. He rubbed his bony knuckles into his eyes, and stared in amaze and terror.

What had happened? The slight figure, clad in orthodox pink tights and jersey—Ted's costume beyond a doubt—was yet not the figure of Ted. It was a few moments before Andrew Driscoll could realise the truth, so boyish, so similar to his son did Nan appear in her borrowed garb. But it was Nan herself—the man recognised the fact with a sickening dread at his heart—Nan, his wife, who had taken Ted's place, and now, smiling and self-possessed, was about to put the lions through their tricks.

She had never before attempted the feat—the lions did not know her—they would not obey her voice.

"Back—back—for Heaven's sake—go!" he waved his hand to her, pointing to the

door by which she had entered, but she did not seem to understand his gesture. She only smiled again, as if reassuringly, and cried out to the animals, forcing them into line, and compelling them to follow each other round the cage, the first trick that they were accustomed to perform.

Andrew would have shouted to her again, but now he was afraid to do so, afraid of alarming the beasts, of letting them realise that it was a new master who had come among them. The audience, too—might not they be terrified if they heard him speak in excited tones? There might even be a panic—and then—the thought was too awful to contemplate. At present they were utterly unaware that anything was wrong; they were watching the gyrations of the lions with excited interest. A boy close to Andrew Driscoll laughed, and the showman turned upon him so furious a look that the lad's jaw fell, and he succumbed into a foolish silence.

Andrew Driscoll stood, spellbound by horror and by a fear such as he had never before experienced. He had organised and carried through many dangerous performances in his time; this girl, this Nan, who was his wife, had taken part in them. But she had not been his wife then, he had not loved her with the passionate devotion he gave her now.

Had he ever realised before how intense was his love for that frail, slim body that might at any moment be thrown down and rent limb from limb before he had time to rescue it? All those other tricks, too, had been rehearsed, but this—this was a blind tempting of Fate.

"Nan! Nan!" He moaned in spirit, for no actual sound came from his lips. He was leaning up against the bars of the cage, and none could see his face or suspect the agony of his mind, none save the girl herself, and she was too occupied with her task to heed.

Trick after trick—the usual routine—unvaried—nothing omitted—nothing introduced. How foolish—how inane was this and—that! The man asked himself what had possessed him to teach Hector that ambling gait which Nan was now insisting the lion should assume. What did it matter? Hector was snarling and growling. Let it go—for the love of Heaven—let it go.

"You do your turn to-night, mark you, every bit of it"—his own words came back to him, searing, torturing words—"head in Nero's mouth and all, or I'll know the reason why."

She was taking him at his word. She would spare herself nothing. She would put her head in Nero's mouth. Oh, the agony of it!

How she cracked her whip! She was overdoing it. Nero would not stand much of that. He was a queer-tempered brute at best. And there had been a look in his eyes—that look came back to the man now—that menace of Nature against the vapid demonstration of man's superiority.

How the yellow eyes had gleamed and glinted! There had been a red light in them, too, a reflection from the bloodshot rims. Andrew Driscoll knew now what it was he had read in them, read half unconsciously, and half unconsciously shuddered at. It was the desire for blood, the lust and craving for it, the pitiless impulse to tear and rend and consume—what a fool he had been not to appreciate this at once, what a fool!

By degrees those eyes—or the vision of them—before his own hypnotised him. They grew bigger and bigger till they were a pair of giant mirrors that reflected lurid yellow and red lights, flashing colours, kaleidoscopic figures.

Soon the two mirrors merged into one, and in this he could see, shadowed as it were by smoke and indefinable changing shapes, all that was passing in the cage.

Upon this his gaze was riveted. Everything else was as though it had no existence. Had he been able to avert his eyes, he would have seen neither the circus, nor the faces of the excited onlookers, nor his companions who, armed like himself, stood almost within touch of him—nothing. Yet to those who saw him that day he stood calm and collected, a little more alert than usual, perhaps, as was only right under the circumstances. Mark Finch and the other keeper thought he had recognised and accepted the position.

Andrew Driscoll gazed into the great mirror, and every second was an eternity. The performance was nearing its end. There was a flash of red light, hiding the animals and the tamer from his eyes for a moment, then, as it cleared away, he saw that Nero was crouching down in a corner, obstinately refusing to obey the word of command.

Nan was striking at him with the butt-end of her whip, thrusting it between his open jaws. And Nero was aiming futile blows at the whip with his great paws, growling low and menacingly. It was no uncommon thing. Ted forced the brute to

do so every day—but now—now—it must not be—for Nero was dangerous—there was murder in his snarl.

"Stop—stop!" It seemed to the man that he cried out thus, but in reality no sound came from his lips.

Suddenly Nero gave a fierce roar and sprang. Andrew Driscoll saw it all clearly in the mirror. A wild turmoil—a vision of leaping, shapeless yellow fur—a momentary glimpse of a puny pink figure thrown to its knees and then disappearing beneath the tawny mass that was hurled upon it—a faint cry, lost in the snarling, yelping, and roaring of the maddened creatures—an awful pandemonium.

The man struck wildly at the cage with the bar of iron which his senseless fingers still gripped, but he was impotent, and he knew his own impotence.

It was too late, too late! The mirror fell from before his eyes, shivering into a thousand glowing sparks of fire, and then all was dark.

* * * * *

"What came over you, boss?" so queried Mark Finch, when Andrew Driscoll opened his eyes to find himself lying prone in one of the dressing-rooms to which he had hastily been carried. "She did it all splendid and without a hitch. I thought it was an arranged thing, the boy not being up to the mark. See, here is Nan herself."

As he spoke, Nan entered the room, Nan smiling, though a little nervous; Nan unhurt, though flushed by the ovation that the crowded audience had just accorded her. Few had noticed that the ringmaster had fainted and been helped off, for the performance had just reached its end, and the curtain before the cage had been lowered even as Andrew Driscoll fell.

"Nan, Nan!" The man took his wife in his arms, and sobbed out that he had had a dream, sobbed out wild words which she could not understand.

"It was all right, Andrew"—she sought to console him—"I wasn't in no danger. I've been in with the lions often enough—though you didn't know it. And I'll do the turn in future if you'll let me, for Ted ain't up to it. You won't thrash him, will you?" she added anxiously.

Ted was not thrashed, for the next morning it was evident enough that his health had given way. Nor did Nan ever again appear among the lions. Andrew Driscoll

had received a shock which induced him to adopt the resolution with which he had long been toying.

Grainger Tuke was ready to take over the circus, lock, stock, and barrel, and to keep it on as a going concern. He would pay well for it, too, so what was to hinder Andrew Driscoll from retiring from circus life as he had so often planned? It was

well for Ted, who needed rest and fresh air to revive his strength; well for Nan, whose one ideal was a creeper-covered cottage and a garden of flowers; well for himself in his advancing age.

So, before long, another boy lion-tamer reigned in the place of Ted Driscoll, and the great circus-going public was none the wiser for the change.

Captain Grace's Promotion.

* * * * *

By EDITH TUPPER.

How a Salvation lass proved her sterling worth.

CAPTAIN GRACE threw open the window of her tiny room and looked out at the bright sunshine, the blue sky, the drifting, fleecy clouds.

"Glory to God!" she murmured. "What a perfect day!"

Then she set the coffee on to boil, toasted some bread, and boiled an egg. Before partaking of this simple breakfast, she bent her shapely brown head, and whispered:

"Give me strength, Father, for to-day."

That was Captain Grace's daily morning prayer. Strength to sustain her through each day's work; to help her bear the taunting words, the insulting laughs, the profanity and bad language hurled at her on her rounds; strength to uphold her in her visits to the slums, to push open the swinging doors of public-houses and attack the Devil in his very stronghold.

Captain Grace was a beauty, and that fact made her life all the harder. The face that looked out from under the Army bonnet was the face of an angel, with its ivory-like complexion, in which roses came and went; with its clear, resolute, turquoise eyes, its dimpled chin, straight little nose, and soft, red lips.

The plain uniform of the Salvation Army, which renders a plain woman an absolute fright by its very severity, only emphasised the loveliness of the girl's face and figure. Too well did the young warrior know her charms. She heard them discussed by men at street corners, in 'buses, before the

West-end hotels, and in the East-end gin palaces.

"What a bloomin' little daisy!" said the Whitechapel rowdy.

"What a little darling!" said the Piccadilly connoisseur.

Captain Grace often wished that she were as ugly as Ensign Samuel, who was pock-marked and squint-eyed, and thus escaped many of Satan's javelins. But a regular life, constant exercise and occupation, and high, pure thought, combined to produce a beauty which grew from day to day, and from which the earthly elements were fast being eliminated.

The girl was gentle, refined and intelligent. She had sacrificed many of the sweets and joys of life to lead this curious existence. She was very reticent about her past, lived only for her work, and to lay up treasure where moth and rust do not corrupt.

In the slums she was known, loved and blessed. Her small hands had pressed the aching head of the suffering, and scrubbed the floors of the slatternly. Her smiles and tears had mingled with those of the unfortunate of the earth. Her cheering words, gracious deeds and prayers, were a sweet savour in the nostrils of the despairing.

And yet Captain Grace was a girl, with a girl's love of pleasure, pretty things, ease, and comfort. She battled fiercely at times with these temptations—faint and weary with warfare, longing to yield, to leave the

strife, to taste happiness and human joy. But her conscience ever sounded a trumpet call, and Captain Grace, obeying, sprang again to the conflict.

Just as she took down her dark blue bonnet from the wall there came a knock at the door. She opened it.

Miss Francesca Foley stood there.

Miss Francesca Foley was rich, pretty, kind-hearted, generous, and always had a nice hobby horse to ride.

Just now her hobby horse was the Salvation Army.

She had attended the meetings, wept in her lace handkerchief, subscribed liberally, and confided to her dear friends that she felt herself chastened and comforted. She had hunted up the pretty Captain, whose face had attracted her, and had made as great a pet of the girl as the young devotee would permit.

"Good-morning, dearest," said the caller.

"Good-morning, dear Francesca," said the Captain. "Come in."

Francesca seated herself and took a long survey of her friend.

The two girls formed a curious contrast. Miss Foley was a study in brown velvet and sable. Big diamonds quivered in her pink ears, and a huge cluster of violets shook out their perfume from her breast. Her great brown eyes flashed questioningly on the other, who stood pale, serious, a trifle sad, but resolute.

"Have you decided, Grace?"

"Yes, Francesca."

"Well, will you come with me—give up this hard life, live with me, be my companion and sister? You know I am alone, rich, my own mistress. You shall have every luxury. We will travel."

Captain Grace lifted a little red, roughened hand.

"No more, no more, I beg!" she said quietly; "it cannot be!"

Miss Francesca Foley burst into tears.

She was honestly disappointed. She was fond of the girl. And she fancied the idea of playing Lady Bountiful. Moreover, she liked to have her own way.

But Captain Grace would not surrender. She had marked out her path in life, and, though it was rough and stony, yet she would follow it.

An hour after this little scene, Captain Grace reported for duty at headquarters. Her sweet face was like a ray of sunshine in the gloomy barracks.

"Good-morning, Captain!" said a black-eyed girl in the slum brigade uniform.

"Good-morning, Lieutenant!" returning the salute. "Do you feel like fighting to-day?"

"Yes, Captain," was the quick response. "I could down the Devil and all his angels this morning."

"That's right," said Captain Grace cheerily.

Lieutenant Sally was one of Captain Grace's *protégées*. She was a brand plucked from the burning. Captain Grace had rescued her from a life of frightful misery and sin, and Sally's devotion to her friend was unbounded.

The two received orders to sell the *War Cry* until two o'clock; after that they were to go about their regular slum duties. Up and down the streets, in and out of buildings, went the pair. They were repulsed and chaffed by turns. Doors were banged in their faces, and coarse jokes cracked at their expense.

But they did not appear to mind. They chatted animatedly, compared sales, encouraged each other. Once Captain Grace helped a feeble, tottering old woman across the street under the very noses of the horses; and once Lieutenant Sally wiped the tears from a dirty child's face and gave it a cake.

It was just as they were about to make their final call in a Beulah Street gin palace, that its doors were violently dashed open, and a dreadful old tramp, filthy and bedraggled, was kicked out on to the pavement.

He was a pitiful sight. Shaking and trembling he stood gazing vacantly about, then suddenly burst into tears.

Captain Grace hesitated one moment.

"Lieutenant," she said calmly, "I will meet you at the Norfolk Street dwellings as soon as possible. I have something to do here."

Lieutenant Sally saluted and departed. Then, with a face as pale as death, but glowing with passion, Captain Grace approached the poor old wayfarer standing there alone, and wiped the tears from his wrinkled cheeks with trembling hands.

"Come, brother," she said gently, "come with me."

And, holding him by his ragged sleeve, Captain Grace steered him along street after street, until she had landed him safely in one of the refuges established and maintained by the Army for such as he.

Then, unwittingly, she set her face towards her Golgotha.

It was nearly four o'clock when she entered the Norfolk Street dwellings. Up the black, creaking stairs she picked her way to the fourth storey, pausing at a rickety door.

The room she entered was quite clean and neat from its recent scrubbing. There was a pot of scraggy geranium in the window. A little boy of six was playing with some battered toys upon the floor. A pale face, white as the flabby pillow on which it lay, looked up with a wan smile as she entered.

"How are you to-day, my dear?" asked Captain Grace, as she bent over the sick woman. "Better? Ah! that's good. Has Lieutenant Sally been here?"

"Yes, she went downstairs about a quarter of an hour ago. See how nice she made everything look."

"Yes, the Lieutenant is a hard worker," said the Captain, trying to mend a disjointed doll for the child, who exhibited her treasures with pride.

There were various other little services her quick eye noticed, and the time slipped away in their performance.

Suddenly there was a commotion. Sounds of hurrying feet and confused murmurs, deepening to a sullen swell of voices, were heard.

Across the threshold, in through the key-hole, in every cranny of the tumble-down door, something grey and ghastly came drifting and creeping in little wreaths and puffs.

At that moment a terrified voice somewhere shrieked the awful word: "Fire!"

The engines came leaping like wild things down the narrow streets. There were

frenzied shouts, cries, prayers, tumult, chaos.

Like flies, the wretched inhabitants of the wretched dwellings clung to the walls, the windows, the narrow fire-escapes. There was the clatter of horses' hoofs, the bang of the ladders as the firemen flung them in place, and above all the heavy drone and hum of the ponderous engines.

"Take her first," said Captain Grace, indicating the sick woman, as a big, brawny fireman, his eyes blazing with heroic excitement, plunged through the crashing window into the room. He gave the Salvation Army girl a look of sturdy admiration and went down the ladder with the woman in his arms.

The child was clinging about Captain Grace's neck, her little face buried on her shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, darling," said the girl, patting her gently; "the good man will come back."

He came, stretching his arm for the child.

"Keep a stiff upper lip," he shouted to her amid the smoke, the falling of timbers, the wavering of the floor under her feet.

It was just then that the billows of smoke rolled apart for a moment, and the crowd saw the Salvation Army girl.

She was kneeling in prayer.

Through that maddened, cursing crowd, made up of roughs, loafers and bruisers, ran a groan.

Men old in crime turned their hardened faces away as the black smoke shut her again from sight.

Then came the last fearful crash, and Captain Grace—steadfast, brave, faithful unto death—was promoted.

✱ ✱ A REPREHENSIBLE PURSUIT. ✱ ✱

BY LESLIE THOMAS.

With autograph-collecting folks

I do not sympathise at all.

It is a nobby which provokes

My tongue to utter words of gall;

For I myself am pestered thus.

I'm not an actor, be it told;

Admiring crowds do not discuss

My deeds, nor are my portraits sold.

My signature is wanted though;

Appealing notes my table deck

From creditors who tell me so. . . .

They'd like it written on a cheque!

Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction.

Few people are fortunate enough to be able to keep up with the literature of the whole world; the majority have to be content with that of their own country. In order that these latter may become acquainted with the writings of foreign authors this feature was introduced. The stories, in all cases, are typical specimens of the literature of the various countries and show their authors at their best.

THE FIRST AND LAST DANCE. ❁ ❁ ❁

By FERENCZ HERCZEG. (From the Hungarian. Translated by Paula Révész.)

Ferencz Herczeg is a follower of the school of Maurus Jokai—the most famous of Hungarian novelists—and a very popular serial story writer, much beloved of the Budapest public. The aim of his school is to write effective realism and yet not to lose that touch of romance, or rather ideality, which lifts realism above squalor and sordidness. In a resumé of Magyar progress, published not long since, a critic of Hungarian literature says: "With Jokai for leader, modern literary attainment in Hungary ranks very high, and keeps well in the van of the literature of Europe. The true 'Hungarian soul' is its pervading power—the spirit of Hungary's people has made Hungary's literature what it is. The national soul has created and inspired it, and it, in its turn, expresses and maintains the national soul." The story we publish is eminently characteristic of Ferencz Herczeg's work.

SHE sat beside her mother, pale and nearly crying, in silent anguish. The most bitter thing that can happen to a girl had happened to her; at her first ball not a single partner wanted to dance with her!

Nonsense, you say! But it is not nonsense. No defeated soldier, no hissed, rejected tragedian feels his failure more bitterly than a seventeen-year-old girl. Her first ballroom success ought to be a delight for all her life, even after she has become a grandmother!

The Gipsy band played the prelude of a quadrille which seemed to question "Why do you not dance?"

How Olga had looked forward to this ball! What an excitement when her dress, and gloves, and shoes came home from the shops.

Olga had held a rehearsal, and had danced round her bedroom, twirling her white ostrich feather fan, just to see how it felt!

Her mother and the family doctor had been disinclined for the whole business, but she had over-persuaded them, and she took good care to tell nobody that there had

been little specks of blood on her handkerchief the day before! If the doctor had known that, he would certainly have stopped her going!

The couples took their places for the quadrille, and Olga's heart was full of bitterness—against herself, against the gentlemen of the Ball Committee with their blue rosettes, against the whole world! But principally against the Tarján girls!

The fat little Tarján girls danced everything; they passed and repassed her, proud of their popularity. To be sure, their brother was in a Hussar regiment, and they gave supper-parties to the young officers—that accounted for a good deal.

At one time in their schooldays Olga and the Tarjans had been friends, and wrote poetry in each other's albums, all about eternal friendship and the pain of parting, which only hope makes endurable; but this did not prevent them from cutting each other later—the fat, prosperous Tarjans, and shy, slender Olga.

The fiat had gone forth from the Tarján set; Olga could not possibly be recognised in Society! Her father had been a bankrupt

merchant. No! one cannot possibly know people like that! And the young men took their cue from the girls.

One by one ladies were fetched out and took their places in the long quadrille, but Olga remained where she was, against the wall.

Just as the dance began, young Illonday came dashing in. He had been hunting all day at his country place, and was unusually late—his face was sunburnt and his eyes shone.

He had found time to get an excellent dinner before he came; his glance traveled gaily round the room and lit on Olga sitting by her mother. He went straight across and asked her to dance. To be sure he remembered what his cousins the Tarjás had decreed as he bowed before little Olga. "They will burst with envy and rage," he thought, chuckling, "but I don't care a hang!"

Olga curtsied, and took his arm in silence, but she could have found it in her heart to embrace him, to scream aloud her delight. Instead of this, she murmured quite softly, in a trembling voice:

"I did not think you would remember me!"

Illonday laughed.

"Remember you? Rather! Why, I used to see you at school when I went to fetch my cousins! One doesn't forget a pretty girl so quickly! I can tell you what you recited on one Speech Day—it was called 'The Frozen Child,' and you looked awfully nice, with your hair all hanging down, and a white frock, and black silk stockings. I thought you were pretty then, but now—" he looked her over with bold, smiling eyes—"now you are ever so much more charming!"

Young Illonday was known to be just the least little bit impertinent, but he was such a good fellow that people forgave him. He was over thirty, too, and growing a little stout; he liked to play the part of uncle to the very young girls!

Besides, he had an unexceptional position; he was a gentleman-in-waiting at Court, and had a nice little estate unencumbered by debts. All the girls thought him a somebody!

The quadrille ended in a gallop. This just suited Illonday's humour.

"You dance superbly," he said to Olga, swinging her round like a feather. "You are a perfect Calliope!"

He meant Terpsichore, but Olga did not

mind; she had never been so happy before! Her face was flushed, and her hair was slipping down, but on they went to the strains of the ever-quickenning gipsy music!

"Olga, take care!" cried her mother, as she flew by.

"Only one more turn!" called back Illonday, and when they stopped Olga suddenly found herself the fashion!

All the young men from the Tarján camp had discovered her beauty and came crowding up, each begging for a dance.

"She is perfectly exquisite!" said Illonday to one and another, and all the others repeated his words. It was a dream of triumph. Everyone in the room was looking at Olga, and she was the undoubted Queen of the Ball.

The knowledge of this made her all the more beautiful and brilliant; she gave away her dances with the most bewitching coquetry; yet all the time she felt strangely tired and almost giddy. Her heart beat wildly, and she longed for her own room and to lie down in the dark on her bed, and be quiet.

Then one glance at the Tarján girls revived her. "They shall see what a splendid time I am having!" she said to herself.

When the *csárdás* began, Illonday came and fetched her out; he had had some more champagne, and he put his hands round her waist, as if he had a right; they danced an endless *csárdás* till everyone else dropped out.

"Olga!" gasped her partner, "I've something serious to say to you; you are the nicest, sweetest, dearest girl I've ever met, and——"

"Oh, Mr. Illonday, please hush!"

"I won't hush! If you'd only say you'd be my wife I'd settle down and be the steadiest fellow on earth! I know you think I'm——"

"Oh, Mr. Illonday!"

"Yes, you do, you think I'm too wild." He held her to him a little more closely: "My mother is always at me about marrying—she will let me marry whom I choose, so long as I bring a wife home soon. She only asks for good looks and good health. My mother is the dearest old lady in the world, and I'm sure——"

Olga's head drooped a little lower, and her handkerchief hid some tiny red spots; the Tarján girls must not guess! After all it was only for one night.

Somebody stopped the *csárdás* by main

force, snatching the violin out of the leader's hand; otherwise Illonday would have gone on till now! He dragged Olga into a corner of the supper-room and flung himself down beside her.

"You think I am talking nonsense, I know, but I am in deadly earnest," he said.

"Stuff! A gentleman-in-waiting, and a bankrupt's daughter!"

"What of that? I have family enough for both of us! You will see to-morrow dear, if I am in earnest or not!"

She laughed; she did not believe him, but why should she not enjoy herself for once? She leant back in her chair while the gipsy musician came and played a soft, wild song in her ear—Illonday had paid him to do so.

Their fingers touched as he filled her glass with champagne; the girl's beauty, her bright eyes, with the two brilliant crimson spots just beneath them, turned the young man's head completely.

After supper they danced again.

"Don't you think you have had enough?" suggested her mother.

"I am not going to give in before the

Tarján girls," laughed Olga, whirling past in Illonday's arms.

* * * * *

Last year, after a long absence, I was back in town, and passed through the cemetery; it was a drizzling, mournful day, and the sodden wreaths piled about a newly-made grave looked dismal enough. Behind rose the familiar stone angel, with his quenched torch.

"Olga Illonday" was the freshly-graven name on the family slab; her maiden name was not given; perhaps old Mrs. Illonday did not wish it!

On the top of all the other wreaths, with wide silk ribbons streaming in the mud, was one inscribed "To the memory of our dearest, never-to-be-forgotten cousin, from the Tarján family."

The tuberose and gardenias filled all the air with their scent. A little white butterfly was flitting to and fro above them, as if the perfume made it giddy.

To me came the fantastic thought that the white butterfly was Olga's spirit—poor little foolish soul!—dancing even in death, that the Tarján girls might see how splendidly she amused herself in the other world!

THE DREADED CHANGE.

By T. L. S.-K. (From the Russian. Translated by Andrey).

The initials T. L. S.-K. are those of Madame Schepkina-Kupernick, a lady who is well known in St. Petersburg society for her philanthropic and literary efforts on behalf of the Theatrical Profession. The main feature of all her stories consists of the expression of intense sympathy with the poor and oppressed of the stage. Madame Schepkina-Kupernick almost invariably publishes her stories anonymously or under her initials only.

SHE had bowed to the actor Osersky on passing him in the street, and had immediately repented of having done so, for he stopped, raising his shiny silk hat.

"I beg your pardon, I really don't quite know—" Then suddenly he exclaimed, in quite a different tone of voice:

"Olga Petrowna! Is it really you? It seems such a long time since last we met."

"Oh, only some three years or so," she replied somewhat sadly.

"No, it is four years, I am sure. The last time I came to this town, with my repertory, to Roman Iljitch's Theatre, is just four years ago."

"Yes, I suppose it must be so."

"How you have altered, my dear girl!"

"You mean aged," she replied, with sad irony, trying to avoid his gaze.

He stood before her, good-looking, well-groomed and resplendent in a costly fur-lined overcoat.

Somewhat condescendingly he said:

"Oh, no, not at all. You are a little stouter, that is all. How have you been getting on, and how is your husband?"

"My poor Vania died a year ago."

"Oh, I am sorry! I did not know. He was quite a young man, too, was he not?"

"Pneumonia," answered Olga Petrowna shortly. It was doubly painful for her to speak of it, feeling that Osersky's interest was more or less simulated.

"Have you any children?"

"Two—boys."

"Ah, well! I suppose you will soon return to the stage again?"

"I have never left it. I am still engaged

by Roman Iljitch, although I am afraid
”

She stopped suddenly, angry with herself. Why should she confide her fears, her troubles, to this smug, well-fed dandy? What of it that he paid her marked attention in those days, and had taken every opportunity to be with her. She was rather different then! A slim, graceful *ingénue*, with a fresh, smiling face, sparkling eyes, and an inexhaustible vivacity. She was known at the theatre in those days as the “Imp.”

Where had all this vanished to?

The answer would be quite clear to anybody who had seen the two poor children in their beggarly surroundings. Osersky had not, of course, seen them, and could not understand what had so altered the poor “Imp.” She saw in his eyes, not sympathy, but a patronising and offensive pity, which made her blood boil.

Brusquely she dismissed him with:

“Good-bye! I am in a hurry!” And, without giving him time to collect himself, she disappeared quickly down the nearest turning.

Olga Petrowna Dalina-Wollskaja, to give her her full name, hurried along the frozen pavement in a very agitated frame of mind; she nervously bit her lips, and the past, so recent, yet seemingly so far away, rose before her.

Success! She had been assured often enough that, with her talents, she was bound to succeed, and she had been compared with her grandmother, who had been a leading actress at one of the Imperial theatres.

She would have come to the front, perhaps, if it had not been for this unfortunate infatuation, which extended over some years, and seemed to have deprived her of all desire for success in her profession; of all power for serious work or study.

Then came the ill-advised marriage with the object of her unreasoning love—a poor bank official, with no prospects to speak of. Two children were born, her husband was taken ill, and soon after died.

She dare not give way to her grief, for she had to think of the poor babies, and work for their sustenance.

She found it very hard, indeed, especially in the Winter, to keep her little home together, for the rent for the three little rooms, together with the nurse’s wages, took the best part of her moderate salary. She had been fortunate enough to discover a decent peasant woman, Dasha, who, on

condition of being allowed to bring her little son to live with her, had agreed to accept reduced wages.

Dasha was very fond of the children, and adored her mistress, whilst, at the same time, domineering it over her shamefully. Olga Petrowna could rely implicitly on her nurse to look after the children on those rare evenings when she was working at the theatre.

Roman Iljitch still kept her on his staff, she herself could hardly tell why, whether out of compassion for her forlorn position, or any other reason; but she had never got beyond the fifty roubles (£5) which she had been receiving monthly since she first went on the stage.

Lately her parts had become fewer and fewer, and, indeed, she could not herself deny that, owing to her stoutness and lack of vivacity, she was not doing justice to such parts as those in which she had formerly excelled. Once or twice the stage-manager had looked at her with half-concealed pity.

Oh, this hateful look of semi-contemptible pity! It hurt Olga Petrowna as if she had been struck with a whip; it was not the woman or her pride which was insulted, oh, no! It frightened the mother, who was in mortal dread that she might lose her only means of livelihood, and what then? The thought alone terrified the poor mother, and the once light-hearted *ingénue* prayed as she had never prayed before.

Poor Olga Petrowna did not realise that she had reached home until after mounting a dozen wooden steps, when she found herself within her little ante-room, and heard the children crying and the monotonous lullaby of the nurse.

The nurse was trying to get the baby Vania off to sleep, while Kolia and the nurse’s son Wassia, both in very scanty attire, were having a subdued but determined tussle on the threadbare carpet in the middle of the room. When the combat grew too boisterous, Wassia, unless he dodged it, got a whack from his mother, who solemnly continued her lullaby.

Turning to Olga Petrowna, Dasha asked: “Did you get that money?”

“Yes, they gave me three roubles for it, so we shall be able to buy some fuel,” replied Olga Petrowna.

“Will you just take baby for a bit, while I go and see about something to eat? I daresay you are famished, too.”

With these words Dasha handed little Vania to her mistress and disappeared in

the region of the kitchen, whence a vigorous clatter of pans and pots, with sundry ejaculations, announced that culinary operations had commenced.

The two boys had at once suspended hostilities on seeing the nurse go into the kitchen, and quickly followed her there, where they stood watching her in open-mouthed surprise.

Suddenly the outer door creaked, and the tread of heavy boots was heard behind the partition.

"Just see who is there, nurse!"

"It is Fedor Ivanovitch, ma'am!" replied Dasha.

Fedor Ivanovitch was the messenger from the theatre. His appearance always agitated Olga Petrowna, and on this occasion she turned quite pale. Depositing the baby gently on the sofa, she went out to the messenger.

"Well, Fedor?"

"Please to sign here," he said, handing her a book with a bit of pencil hanging to it. "You are requested to be at the theatre at three o'clock this afternoon."

What could this mean? Olga Petrowna felt her heart beating violently.

"Don't you know what it is they want me for, Fedor?"

"How are we to know?" replied Fedor, shaking his head. "They don't tell us."

"Is it a rehearsal, perhaps?"

"No, the rehearsal was this morning at ten o'clock."

"Oh, very well, I'll come, I'll come," said Olga Petrowna, hurriedly signing her name in the book.

The messenger left, and she dropped helplessly on to the couch, trembling with fear of impending trouble, and an awful feeling of helplessness crushing her.

"They call me—after the rehearsal. I know what will happen: The stage-manager will simply tell me that I am not wanted: Dismissal! Oh, my poor children, what is to become of you?"

Covering her face with her hands, she wept silently.

"Now, why give way like this?" the nurse said, bending over her and trying to console her. "You had better eat something. The stew is just ready."

Finding her attempt at consoling her mistress unavailing, Dasha sadly shook her head, and returned to the kitchen.

Little Kolia, observing his mother strangely silent, went up to the couch, and looked at her with his large, grey eyes.

Startled and amazed at her not taking any notice of him, he put his little, chubby arms around his mother's neck, and his face against hers, but seeing his mother cry his fortitude gave way too, and he began to weep bitterly.

"Don't cry, darling, don't cry. I will go as a servant or even charwoman! I would do anything rather than see my babies starve."

* * * * *

Warwara Pawlowna Radina-Streletzky was sitting in her spacious dining-room drinking coffee, the oak paneling and the heavy curtains and drapery giving the room an air of solid comfort.

Mr. Streletzky, in a velvet smoking jacket, sat opposite to his wife, and read the newspaper. A smartly-dressed parlourmaid, wearing a becoming white cap, served at the table.

Everything seemed to point to luxury, comfort, and domestic happiness.

This pretty picture, however, was somewhat marred by the bright sun breaking through the large windows, showing the oak paneling to be cheap wood only, and the curtains to be shoddy and tawdry.

It also showed the tired eyes of Warwara Pawlowna, the wrinkles near her eyes and on her neck, and the greyish complexion which defied all preparations and "systems" for beautifying the skin.

Although the husband invariably addressed his wife as: "My darling," "My dearest one," or "My angel," and she called him, for some reason or other: "Missia," there was an unmistakable air of boredom and discontent about the place.

Both husband and wife had been at Roman Iljitch's theatre for over fifteen years; they were one of the couples looked upon as a shining example to the theatrical world. They endeavoured to live in the most correct style, and prided themselves on it, but their chief anxiety was not to be classed with the "Theatrical Bohemia," as they called it. Late suppers, or any other similar dissipation, did not tempt them. They lived most methodically, and consequently were able to put money in the bank.

Warwara Pawlowna was older than her husband. Before she was engaged by Roman Iljitch, she had played for nearly ten years at different provincial theatres with considerable success, and for many years she had charmed the public with her merry

laughter, her innocent eyes, and pert, snub nose.

It must be admitted, however, that during the last year or two her movements seemed to lack their former vivacity and lightness, and although her laughter still rang clear, the most skilful dressmaker could not transform her figure into that of youth.

During the last three years or so, those light comedies which were Warwara Pawlowna's delight, and in which she had excelled, had appeared less and less frequently in the repertory; the public seemed to demand nothing but dramas, melodramas, and even tragedies; so that Warwara Pawlowna was but rarely called upon to take a part now. She sulked and grumbled and expressed her intention of having it out with Samaieff, the stage-manager.

The parlourmaid entered noiselessly, and handed to Warwara Pawlowna a book and a roll of papers.

"Kindly sign this, ma'am. The messenger brought it from the theatre."

"A part!" exclaimed Warwara Pawlowna, forgetting her usual reserve, and pouncing on the roll of paper. "In the new piece, no doubt. I wonder why Samaieff never told me anything! There's a part for you, too."

Streletzky also got up from his seat, both hurriedly signed the book, and, dismissing the servant, took up their parts.

All signs of their former boredom had disappeared, and Warwara Pawlowna looked quite animated, as she read out the title of the play:

"*'The Marriage of Nina'*"; it sounds rather interesting."

Suddenly she stopped, her eyes wide open; she fell back as if struck, still looking at the words she had just read.

"What is the matter, my darling?" inquired her husband uneasily, observing his wife's agitation.

She handed him the pamphlet in silence.

There, in black and white, he read the following:

"Part of Paulina Ivanowna Malina, a coquette of nearly fifty, striving to look youthful."

Streletzky was nonplussed for the moment; then, without looking at his wife, he muttered:

"This must surely be a mistake, my angel!"

Warwara Pawlowna had now regained her

speech. Jumping from her seat she began pacing the room like a tigress.

"A mistake!" she cried hysterically: "A mistake! Oh, no! I know what it is: This is one of Samaieff's tricks. He and his clique. They thought to have the laugh of me, but they will be disappointed. What contemptible meanness! They arranged this 'change' without even consulting me: I shall never forgive them this abominable treatment! I'll write to all the newspapers! I'll tear up the contract! I can do well enough in other towns, then they will see how they get on without me! Ha, ha, ha! If they went down on their knees I would not go back! Oh, the wicked scoundrels!"

She pressed her hand to her chest, unable to get her breath, and dropped on to the couch.

"My darling, do calm yourself!" implored Streletzky, rushing to the sideboard and bringing her a glass of water.

She pushed him roughly away, so that some of the water was spilt over her dress.

"Go away! Will you go away!"

She again jumped up, tears running down her face, to the detriment of her touched-up complexion:

"It is all the same to you, of course! I'm sure they have sent you again the 'young lover's' part. It is I only who am thus grossly insulted, after all that I have done, too."

With hysterical shrieks and moans she threw herself on the couch. In a few minutes the servant ran for the doctor, and Streletzky, on the latter's arrival, hurried off to interview Samaieff.

* * * * *

Olga Petrowna passed on to the stage through the side entrance.

For the first time in her career she was afraid of the theatre. It seemed to her as something living, something as inscrutable, as merciless as Fate itself.

"I will devour all that I need from you, and then throw you away as a useless thing." She seemed to hear those words, and a mocking echo came from the depth of the stage.

Much agitated, Olga Petrowna entered the stage-manager's room, feeling almost as if she were going to her execution.

Her fate would be decided now; she seemed to be quite certain of her dismissal; she seemed to hear the very words:

"I have no parts for you. You are no

longer suitable for light comedy, etc., etc., etc."

"Well, what of that?" she thought, endeavouring in a dull sort of way to collect her wandering thoughts. "I will ask to be allowed to stay on, even as dresser! Anything rather than face hunger!"

From behind his books and papers Samaieff nodded to her; his rather tired, but good-natured face looked at her with the usual pitying expression.

"How do you do, my dear? I asked you to call——"

Samaieff was, on principle, equally amiable with all, and under all circumstances retained a certain bored calmness.

"What do you wish me to call, Peter Ivanovitch?" she whispered.

He still looked at her pale, tortured face, the well-worn hat, and faded cape, then cleared his throat.

"Now, now! It is coming now! Heaven help me!" thought poor Olga Petrowna.

He commenced in a somewhat diffident manner, evidently trying not to hurt her feelings.

"I thought it best to ask you to call, my dear, and to speak to you myself. I have here a part, but do not know whether you would care to take it. I know, of course, that you are still young, but, don't you see, we must have a comical old lady. I know you have talent, and I well remember your grandmother. It is, of course, early for you to make the 'change' yet, but I would strongly advise you to take this part. It is a good part, and can be made very effective, and Roman Iljitch would, under the circumstances, increase your salary."

When Samaieff looked up he was amazed at the change in her appearance; although

there were tears in her eyes, they were shining brightly, and her face was beaming with happy smiles.

Somewhat incoherently she murmured:

"Oh, yes, of course! Thank you, thank you very much. I shall be very glad of the part. You will see, I will do my very best with it. Thank you for the confidence you have shown in me."

She warmly shook his hand, forgetting her usual timidity.

He looked at her kindly when he handed her the part. The inscription on it was as follows:

"Part of Paulina Ivanowna Malina, a coquette of nearly fifty, striving to look youthful."

"Thanks! Many thanks!"

Olga Petrowna, hardly knowing what she did, rushed out of the theatre, and hurried home as fast as she could, holding the precious pamphlet containing her part tightly to her breast. The "change" had now been made, and the future of her children was secured. The "would-be-young-at-fifty coquette" had saved them, perhaps from starvation.

When she burst upon her little family Olga Petrowna unrestrainedly gave way to tears of joy, which somewhat alarmed the sleepy Dasha, who looked at her mistress as if doubtful of her sanity. But Olga Petrowna had only eyes for her children, and kept whispering joyfully:

"You will not want now, my darlings. We shall live in peace and comfort. I will play my part as I never played before, and bring you up to be a credit to your father. Yes, my darlings, God has helped us."

And little Kolia seemed to understand it all, for he smiled at his mother with a happy, beaming face:

✱ ✱ *THE REASON.* ✱ ✱

BY GRACE MILLER.

*You ask me how it was I came,
Long, long before I knew your name,
Or could acquaintance with you claim,
To love you.*

*You ask me how I made my choice
Before I'd even heard your voice,
And how in silence could rejoice
To love you.*

*For answer, I can only say,
That on your face the blame I lay,
Its beauty taught my heart the way
To love you.*

The Secret Guest. * * *

* * * By A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK.

NEW READERS MAY BEGIN HERE.

The narrator of this story, Timothy Pepper, lives with his aunt, who wishes him to marry a girl named Alice North. Alice, however, is secretly engaged to a certain Graham Stanton.

Timothy starts on a walking tour, and one evening, while on his way from Rottingdean to Newhaven, is attacked from behind and rendered unconscious. On coming to his senses he finds that he is lying in an old mill. In the distance he hears voices and the sound of digging. He looks about and sees two men—one old and one young—digging a grave, and from their conversation he gathers that it is for himself, though why they bear him a grudge he cannot imagine. They must have mistaken him for someone else.

Timothy escapes quickly from the mill and soon comes to a farmhouse. He is admitted by a girl, to whom he tells his story. When she hears it she becomes very agitated, and, without giving a reason, begs him to continue his journey at once. But he is too weak to go further, and the girl has just made him comfortable in an arm-chair when a voice is heard calling her by name—Doris. It is the voice of the older man who was digging the grave. He is here, then, in the next room, actually. What will happen now?

CHAPTER IX.

What I Overheard.

"OH, here you are!" the rasping voice continued. "Well? Has he been yet?"

"No." She had evidently joined them in the next room, and, remembering how unnerved she had been just before she left me, I was amazed that she could answer so calmly and with such promptness. "You have not met him, then?"

"Met him? What do you mean, girl?"

"I thought you had gone to meet him."

"Nonsense! You'd no reason to think anything of the kind. Meet him!" he blustered. "I've got something better to do. We've been right the other way, George and me have—into Rottingdean on business. Meet him! He knows his way here well enough, doesn't he? He's been often enough before. . . . And he hasn't come yet?"

"Not yet."

"Where's your mother?"

"Gone to bed. She was tired, and said there was no need for more than one of us to sit up."

"And the maids?"

"They set supper for him and for you, and I told them they need not sit up either as it was so late."

"Nice sort of welcome for a visitor—to find everybody in bed when he gets here."

He said it mockingly, and yet I had an impression from his manner of saying it that he was more relieved than otherwise that he had not found a wakeful and expectant household.

"But you know he is not always reliable, father. Once he kept us up waiting for him

nearly half the night, and then did not come until the day after he had been expected, and he begged us never to make preparations again, and treat him like a stranger, but to let him come and take his chance—and we have taken him at his word ever since. Besides, I reckoned you and George would be back before he was here——"

"So we are," he interrupted. "But he ought to have been here two hours ago, if he'd kept to the time he mentioned in his letter. Still, as you say, he's never reliable. He's done this before—fixed a time to arrive and then not stuck to it." He spoke with a curious emphasis, as if it were a fact he was desirous of impressing on her mind. "If he will play those games, he must put up with the consequences. I'm not goin' to wait up for him, and you needn't either. You be off to bed, my lass. Everything's on the table, isn't it? Very well, George and me can eat our suppers without anybody to look on. If he don't get here till after the place is locked up, he'll have to knock till he wakes us, that's all. Good-night."

She lingered, exchanging a few words with them on trivial household matters, as if she had forgotten me and the fear she had had for me. Presently she left them, and I heard her footsteps going up the stairs, for the house was very quiet.

When her light footsteps ceased, with the closing of an upper door, my unseen neighbours appeared to relax and become more at their ease.

"What's it mean?" asked the younger one, whom I took to be George. "Where is he?"

"What's the use of asking me, yer young fool?" demanded the other. "I know where he would ha' been by now, if you'd

had the sense or the pluck to do your share of the job properly."

"How could I help it? I saw him lying on the floor where we put him, and I'd ha' sworn he was dead, I tell yer."

"Saw him—yes! And you were afraid to touch him, or you should ha' known better, and this wouldn't have happened. Lor', I was the bigger fool to trust yer! But I felt sartin sure of him. I hit hard enough, and in the right place, and when we got him into the mill I'd have took my oath there wasn't a spark of life in him, but— It's no good talking; it's the durndest queer thing ever I knowed of—he must have been shamming when you went in, and bolted as soon as your back was turned. Why didn't he make his way straight here, though, that's what I can't understand."

"Unless he knew it was us——"

"How could he? He never had a chance of seeing us; I took good care of that."

"Except when I went into the mill. I struck some matches so that I could see him, and if he was only shamming then——"

The old man broke in with a thunderous roll of curses. I pictured him to myself, from his tones and language, a brutal, selfish, sturdy old ruffian, who was capable of killing a man, if it were desirable in his own interests, with as little compunction as he would slaughter any animal on his farm.

A thin line of light shone in through the key-hole of the door between the rooms, and I was tempted to quit my seat and endeavour to get a view of him, but being weak still and uncertain of my surroundings, I refrained.

"He couldn't have gone far in the state he must have been in," he declared. "Ten to one he's dropped exhausted somewhere, and we've overlooked him, and if he dies and his body's found, and the thing's brought home to us—and nothing's impossible in these days, worse luck!—it'll be you, yer blithering fool, that'll bring us both to the gallows!"

"That's all very well!" protested the other irritably. "What have I done——"

"It's what you didn't do that'll do it. You went into the mill to make sartin sure, and if you hadn't been too big a coward you'd ha' done it. It's your frightened half-heartedness all through that's upset everything."

"I can't help it. You talk as if it was a safe and easy move and could be done without any danger of getting us into a mess——"

"We were in a bad enough mess already, weren't we? We thrashed it out and agreed that this was the only way out of it, didn't we? He don't love me, and he don't trust me; and if I'd owned up, it would have meant ruin and the gaol for me, and for you—you'd have had to begin life afresh without a penny in your pocket. If you'd stood by me, he'd have been stowed away tight under ground at this minute, with nobody none the wiser, and I could have been comfortable for the rest of my days, and you'd ha' been well provided for when I died. Worth a little risk, wasn't it?"

"Still, it's no good you and me quarrelling," he continued more resignedly. "We made a mucker of it, and all we can do now is to know nothing whatever about it! See? We can prove, if necessary, that we were in Rottingdean this evening. We came back home expecting to find him here. The girl knows that. It may have been tramps—the road's lonely enough this time of night for anything—all we know is that we know nothing at all about it. If you stick to that with a bit more pluck than you've shown so far, they can't rake up a scrap of evidence to fasten it on us, and we'll be all right even yet."

"I shall stick to it fast enough," he added, after a pause; "make no mistake about that. If anyone gives us away, George, it'll have to be you, for, by Heaven! they'll get nowt out o' me, and there's been no third partner in this business!"

CHAPTER X.

In Hiding.

THEY sat on for some time, going over the same disputes and proposals with a wearisome reiteration.

"Bolt?" sneered the old man scornfully, in response to a tentative suggestion that I had not quite caught. "I'm none so mad as that, my lad, and I should hope you're not, either. You've no need to be. If he's killed, I killed him, and I'm ready to keep you clear of the blame. But if you're fool enough to run away, it'll count as much against you as against me—you simply will be putting the rope round yer own neck."

"I shan't run away if you don't. I only meant——"

"Make no mistake—I shan't run. I shall just sit it out and wait quietly, as an innocent man would. If I knew what had become of him, and whether he's living, and

what game he'll be playing, I could be better prepared. Not knowing that, all we can do is to sit tight, and be taken by surprise, whatever we hear or whatever happens to us. See?"

"Aye," the other glumly agreed. "If he is alive he's not coming here, else he'd have been here before this."

"That's so. He'll not be here to-night, anyhow, so it's no use staying up for him. I'm dog tired, and, as Doris said, he's so unreliable that there's nowt strange in us givin' him up and goin' to bed. Come on."

There was a sound of chairs being pushed back from the table; the key-hole suddenly blinked and remained dark, as if they had turned the lamp out or were carrying it away. I clutched the arms of the chair and held myself breathlessly alert while they were passing my door in the hall. Suppose they glanced in to see that the place was secure for the night—they must inevitably detect my presence, and what was I to say, how was I to act? But they went past, and I breathed again.

When their blundering tread had gone from the stairs, and they were both out of hearing, a great silence gathered over the house, and deepened till I was so oppressed and obsessed by it that I felt an easy prey to all manner of outrageous apprehensions.

A sudden weird chuckle and growl close without brought my heart into my mouth, and I had half-risen from my seat, on some wild instinct of self-defence, before I realised that it was nothing but the ancient clock in the hall achieving a sort of preliminary clearing of its throat and starting to strike twelve. The silence rushed in suffocatingly on the last stroke, and I was soon struggling again in the interminable, deathly coils of it.

Doris had said she would come back to me—I was to wait until she came; and for awhile I waited patiently.

I was not so utterly absorbed in the hazards of my situation but that I felt a foolish flutter of ecstasy tingle through me at the mere thinking of her by that name. I was indefinably pleased and yet surprised at my presumption in using it so familiarly, even in thought, and had to excuse myself apologetically with a reminder that her other name was still unknown to me.

It was strange that the thinking of her name could affect me so, and the wonder of it, and some instinctive, unacknowledged inkling I had of the meaning of it, led me into idle dreamings, and a brief forgetfulness

of all but her. You may say it was strange that, at such a crisis, I could detach myself sufficiently from my surroundings to find a momentary happiness in blowing those immaterial dream-bubbles. I said so myself, when I recollected it afterwards.

Yet the fact remains that a thought of her charmed me into a fleeting oblivion of all else. It seemed singularly unlike me, for I am one of the least susceptible of men and the least impulsive; but as the minutes passed, and still she did not come, this serenity began to desert me, and I was fretted with brain-sick doubts that grew rapidly and developed through a variety of portentous forms; though I believe that, all the while, at the root of my impatience at her delay there was nothing worse than a blind desire for her presence, a yearning to see her, to hear her, to have her near me again.

With the passing of those dreams, too, I was left more keenly conscious of my personal discomforts; the pain in my head gathered in intensity and gave an edge to every doubt that got hold upon me.

What could it mean, this abandoning me to my fate? She could not have forgotten me. She had warned me; she had urged me to stay where I was until she returned—could she have any purpose, apart from my safety, in wishing to detain me there?

I was ashamed of the suspicion, yet I went on feverishly to remind myself that, from what I had overheard, the man who had made this murderous attack on me was her father. Perhaps, on consideration, she had recognised what my escape now might mean to him, and it was natural that her sense of duty, if not her affection, should restrain her from sacrificing him in order to preserve me.

Confronted with this dilemma, she might have gone to him—she was very likely with him at this moment, confessing everything, revealing my whereabouts to him and pleading for my life, for she was too humane, too wholly compassionate, to be any party to inflicting harm on me; in the very darkest of my throes I had never a doubt of that.

But, "If she has felt driven to do that," I said to myself desperately, "if she wants to protect both of us, and thinks she can trust to his mercy, I have heard enough of him to know that she can't. He is brute enough to put me out of the way and her too, if it were necessary on his own account. His attack on me may have been a mistake—it must have been—but there was a reason at the back of it, and if what has been done

can't be undone, it can be done more thoroughly."

Therefore, if my surmises were correct, as they seemed to be at the time, I could rely on no help from anyone; I must fight alone for my own hand; and obviously the first thing to do was to get out of this house before it was too late.

So impelled, I made a hasty effort to rise, but sank back again dizzy and helpless; I trembled in every limb from sheer weakness. If, by any superhuman exertion of will, I could have crawled out of the place, I knew that I must have swooned from pain and exhaustion before I had managed to stagger a dozen paces from it.

There was nothing for it, then, but to stay where I was and await the issue of events. If Doris had betrayed me, and he was as impervious to her appeals as I expected him to be, I was completely at his mercy when he came down to me, and had nothing to hope from it.

I was dully acknowledging this, and reconciling myself to the worst, when a furtive, scarce audible sound thrilled and chilled me. For an instant my pulses stopped beating; then they started throbbing again in a frenzy, and my dormant instinct of self-preservation leapt into resolute alertness.

Someone had turned the handle of the door, and was coming stealthily in upon me; but my alarm subsided as suddenly as it rose.

Directly I could distinguish an outline of her among the shadows, and was relieved by Doris' reassuring whisper, the revulsion of feeling was so extreme that I was near to breaking down altogether.

Not that I am a coward. I am as little cowardly as I am heroic, but the rush of unimaginable incidents that had, within the last few hours, broken in upon the uneventful tenor of my orderly, every-day experiences, were more than the strongest mind could endure unmoved.

"I am sorry I have been so long," she said, pausing by my chair, "but it was not safe to come sooner. I waited till I felt sure they would be asleep."

"I was afraid they would have found me here," I told her. "There is a door here into the next room——"

"It is always kept locked," she answered, "and this room is never used except on Sundays. But it will not do for you to stay here," she went on, in hurried undertones, "and you are not fit to go——"

"I will try—I daresay I can manage——"

"No, no," she said eagerly. "I have

thought of it, and I scarcely know how to act for the best. There is an old attic; if you could reach it quietly, without rousing anyone, you might hide there undisturbed for months. It is a lumber room, and nobody ever goes to it. I could attend to your wounds there, and perhaps to-morrow, or Monday, you would be well enough to go. I think it would be better for you that way, and for—and for my father."

I admit—though I cannot do so without giving you an erroneous impression that I am an extremely sentimental person, when the fact is I am quite the reverse of that—I admit that I did not require much persuading. I was more than willing to stay under the same roof with her, for when I went I should have no excuse to return, and there was no knowing whether I should have an opportunity of meeting her again.

I appreciated also her reason for wishing me to remain. I have none of that imaginative complacency that enables some men to flatter themselves that women in general are attracted to them, and that if a girl shows interest in or concern for them, there can be but one cause for it.

I never fancied for a moment that she felt anything of the subtle pleasure in my neighbourhood that I found in being near her. She was still very agitated, and during that hasty, whispered discourse of ours, I could read between her words that she feared if I returned to my lodging at Rottingdean in my present condition I should require nursing and attention, and could not help exciting so much comment and inquiry that I should be bound to explain matters, and this must involve her father in serious consequences. She naturally wanted to prevent this, and to prevent it without exposing me to further risks from his incomprehensible vindictiveness.

That was how I interpreted her words and bearing towards me, and if subsequent developments did not prove that I had entirely understood her, they made it apparent that I had not been very wide of the mark.

"I don't like giving you so much trouble," I protested, "or letting you run so much risk for me."

But she would not hear of this.

"And if you stop here—I have been thinking of it," she said, "it will be far less risky than going away, for if they discovered you, there are others in the house. There are the servants, and my mother, and with so many witnesses they would not

dare— Besides, they cannot have meant to harm you ; it is all some dreadful mistake ; and if I were not certain that, at the worst, I can prevent them from attempting to do you any further injury—”

I was as certain of it myself, and assured her that, so far from fearing anything, I would infinitely rather remain there than be turned adrift, shattered as I was. A day's rest would do much towards mending me—for I was no weakling—and then I could decide on the course I would pursue, and shift for myself.

Anything in the way of adventure was so new to me that, but for the pain I endured, I believe I could have found a fearful and rather boyish delight in it. Even as it was, despite my narrow escape from death and the menacing possibilities that lay ahead of me, there was a something that sent a tingle of pleasant excitement through my veins in the facing of danger side by side with so sweet an ally and protectress.

Nevertheless, I was keenly alive to the serious realities of my position. I inquired the whereabouts of the rooms in which the two men slept, and took my boots off that I might walk the more softly past them.

The room spun dizzily round me directly I stood up, and I should have fallen if Doris had not been by to support me. After the first step or two I managed to steady myself, but how I groped my way through the dense night, out across the hall and up the long staircase to the garret, is even more of a wonder to me now, when I look back upon it, than it seemed at the time.

Slowly we climbed, and at every creak of the stairs I came to a pause, momentarily expecting a door to swing open somewhere in the darkness, and a flood of light to stream out and reveal us to the eyes we were shunning ; and at every pause Doris' grasp on my arm tightened, and I knew that she was as anxious as myself and as resolutely ready for whatever might befall.

We passed a half-landing safely, and the first floor ; then the staircase narrowed and was steeper. At the top we arrived on a landing crowded with boxes and packages ; Doris led me blindly forward between these and I heard her open a door.

We advanced a few paces further, and I could see the dusky square of a window glimmering before me. With a cautionary murmur, she closed the door, and conjured the unseen into sudden and startling visibility around us by striking a match and lighting a candle.

CHAPTER XI.

A Quiet Interval.

WE had arrived in a dusty garret, a queer, comfortless place that seemed to be made up of angles and odd corners. The roof began at a good height, but sloped till it almost reached the floor, except where the window broke through and was so built out as to form quite a considerable recess. There was another and deeper recess at the far end of the room, and here, in a space that had been cleared among the miscellaneous rubbish that was littered everywhere, a pile of rugs was disposed for me to lie on.

This was how Doris had been busied, then, while I had been fuming at her long delay and beginning to suspect that she had betrayed me. Glancing in mute contrition at the tender, girlish figure beside me, at the sweet face, pale and anxious now in my behalf, I felt more ashamed than ever of those mean suspicions, and was filled with a desire to confess humbly how I had wronged her and ask her forgiveness.

An irrational desire, to which I was not so weak as to yield in that unseasonable moment ; and later, when I was able to see things in their proper proportions, I recognised that there was no need to exaggerate so trivial a matter into a serious fault by saying much about it.

She put the candle down where its light could not shine upon the window ; and the depths of the recess were not only beyond the sight of anyone looking into the room, but two huge, worm-eaten chests, raised one on top of the other, made a screen betwixt me and the door.

“ Though nobody is the least likely to come here,” she reassured me, “ for there is nothing that anyone ever wants.”

That was pretty obvious. The whole contents of the room were the veriest waste : crippled furniture, broken boxes, rusted fragments of farming implements, nothing but such useless lumber as would be burnt or thrown away if people hadn't a magpie instinct for saving it.

“ My father's room is just under this,” Doris warned me, “ but nobody knows you are here—except me. They will not dream of searching the house for you. I will come up early in the morning. If I am long coming you will guess that I am waiting for an opportunity to get away without being noticed.”

My whispered reply may have been

inaudible, but I looked my thanks into her eyes, and when she offered me her hand with a murmur of "Good-night," I clasped it fervently and, moved by some involuntary impulse of sheer gratitude, lifted it to my lips.

But though I had meant in that humble action to express only an unspeakable gratefulness, it was not gratefulness only that thrilled me at the touch of her hand against my lips, and sent a sudden fire flaming redly from my heart into my face; and I think she knew it, and I hoped it was not altogether because she was angry with me that she withdrew her hand and left me in such timorous haste.

I stood still in the attitude in which I had been over her hand; she vanished round the two chests, I heard her glide across to the door, heard the door close after her with so little sound that it would not have reached me if I had not been listening for it; then I roused myself with a sigh and gazed forlornly about me.

But my forlornness dwindled as I gazed. Nothing I might require in my solitude had been forgotten; there were matches in the candlestick, food and water on the box beside me, and a small flask of brandy. There was also, to my astonishment, a revolver. It was her brother's, and she had, as I learnt afterwards, loaded and left it there that I might have means to protect myself in an emergency. But I have never used such a weapon, and was doubtful how to handle it, so I was careful to lay it well out of the way with the muzzle to the wall. All the same, these signs of her solicitude revived my spirits and made the drab unhomeliness of my surroundings more than tolerable.

Feeling safe in my reliance on her, I settled down presently on the pile of rugs and put out the light.

It was some time before I fell asleep, but it was not so much the dull, continuing ache in my head that kept me awake, as that I had so many and such baffling things to think of. Unromantic, business-like fellow as I am, the rush of experiences and emotions that had come upon me since morning seemed more and more fantastic and unreal the longer I reflected on them.

I am no sentimental dreamer, and had always entertained contempt for those who were, yet here was I suddenly steeped in sentimental and wildly-extravagant musings and imaginings. My reading had been limited to books and papers that deal with

political and sociological questions; I had never wasted time over novels or works of fiction since I was a boy, and it was curious that lying there that night I should be led to remember and compare myself with the hero of the only story that has ever really interested me.

I was a sort of Robinson Crusoe there, as effectually cut off from the world, on those wide and sparsely-inhabited Downs, and as closely menaced by unknown terrors as he had been on his desert island. But I had a better ally even than he had in his Man Friday, and because of her I could not be quite sorry that these misfortunes had happened to me.

I pictured myself at my desk in the bank; I thought of my fellow clerks, and wondered what they would say if they could see me—a staid and respectable clerk, whom they inevitably associated with a frock coat and an imposing tall hat—lying with my head bandaged, hiding in that chaotic attic, with such an evening of lurid adventure behind me, and there was no knowing what of worse or better not far ahead of me.

I thought of my Aunt Betty—of how horrified she would be if she could wake in the night to some occult consciousness of what I was undergoing. And this brought me to think of Alice, and I realised with a guilty shock that in these last hours she had passed completely out of my mind.

Yet when I started from London, a few mornings ago, all my thoughts had been of her; I was overwhelmed and looked to get no happiness out of life any more, and was furiously jealous of the man she had preferred to me.

I remembered it all, flushing in the dark at the memory of my foolishness; for I knew now that I never had loved Alice, and as for my jealousy of that other man—why, I had no reason to be jealous, and it was absurd to suppose that I had been.

Which led me back again to Doris, and thinking of her, I drifted at last into sleep.

CHAPTER XII:

A Revelation.

WHEN I awoke, it was broad day, and the room was flooded with sunlight.

The strong, fierce glow showed it naked in all its squalor and untidiness. The air was thick with dust; through the widening sunbeam that streamed in at the uncurtained

window it rose continually, wavering and dully glimmering like infinitesimal bubbles that, as they floated airily out of it, vanished, as if the bubbles had burst. The shabby, crazy boxes, chairs, and fragmentary furniture, the waste and wreckage of the household flung up here as the flotsam and jetsam of the sea are left heaped and dry on a high shore by the receding tide—I blinked round wonderingly on it all, and, for the instant, could not think where I was; it seemed all so wildly unfamiliar.

It sounds prosaic, no doubt; I have warned you that I am a prosaic man; but the sight of the plate and the remains of my supper on the box beside me reminded me immediately of Doris, and remembering her, I remembered everything.

My head was still painful, but the night's sleep had done much to restore me. The terrible feeling of helpless exhaustion had gone from me, and though I was seized with giddiness directly I raised myself on my elbow, it was merely a passing sensation, and when I presently rose to my feet I had complete control of my movements and could walk without difficulty.

I crossed the floor lightly and looked from the window out over miles of dreary, treeless upland. The whole country was laid out in patches of diverse colours; here a big square of yellowing corn, there a smaller one of seamy, brown earth, next it an acre or two of half-mown hay, and beyond, large squares in several shades of green and drab. Nowhere was the monotony of it broken by any moving figure of man or beast.

Opening the lattice, which was fastened by a primitive catch, I leant out warily and could peer down on the yard behind the house and its fringe of straggling farm-buildings. There were fowls scratching in the yard, and a couple of pigs nosing and grunting round a heap of refuse in a field to the side of the premises. Otherwise no living creature was visible anywhere on the vast range of country that unrolled itself beneath me. I never felt so outcast or was so oppressed with loneliness in my life.

If my whereabouts were discovered, in spite of Doris' vigilance, or in consequence of it, and that old man and his rascally son came in upon me in the night, I might shout myself hoarse in such a spot; and here, as in the mill, neither my shoutings nor the uproar of our fighting was likely to bring anybody to my aid. Once the worst was done, even Doris might shrink from

betraying her own father, seeing that then his punishment could not serve me.

As I drew my head in, filled with these forebodings, a sound in the room at the back of me made my heart almost stop beating, and when I turned and saw it was Doris, her name started to my lips in an involuntary exclamation, so instant and extreme was my relief.

I had thought of her so much as simply "Doris," had found a subtle delight in calling her so to myself, that I suppose it was natural, in my excitement, that her name should thus escape me; nevertheless, I was abashed at my boldness, and glad she did not seem to have noticed it.

She put down the tray she was carrying, and was so evidently in haste that I did not attempt to detain her.

"I could not come sooner," she said, "and I dare not stop now, but I will come back again presently."

With that, and before I could answer, she whipped out of the garret, and closed the door.

There was a jug of fragrant, hot coffee on the tray, and more in the way of breakfast than I had appetite for, but I did my best with it, and, when I had finished, lay down again considerably refreshed.

It was a weary while that I waited for her to return. The floor and the walls were so thick that I could hear no sounds of life in the house below; and the vast solitude without was absolutely silent, except for an interval when, with the veering of the breeze, I caught a thin chime of far-off bells, and guessing it to be about church-time, wound up my watch and put it on accordingly.

It was a weary waiting; I have no fondness for meditation, and I have not the gift that enables some men to be idle without finding it irksome; yet there was nothing with which I could occupy myself.

I got up again by-and-by, and tried to extract some entertainment from the reading of a ten-year-old newspaper that I raked from among the rubbish on the floor. I had exhausted this and was once more surveying the uninteresting prospect from the window, when, at last, I detected a soft footfall on the stairs, and, almost simultaneously, the door opened and gave her back to me.

She had brought warm water and linen and needful medicaments, and insisted, in her gentle, practical fashion, on my sitting down while she bathed my wounds and

changed the bandages on my head; and as she was doing this, with quick and skilful fingers that scarcely caused me any pain, she tried to account for something of the extraordinary misfortune that had befallen me.

I was curiously thankful to learn, in the first place, that the old farmer, Mr. Chardon, and his son, were not actually related to her; they were no more than step-father and step-brother to her, her mother having married a second husband seven years ago. It was good to know that she had no kinship with two such ruffians; and this detaching of her from them seemed to leave her as lonely in the world as I was, and to draw us unconsciously into closer sympathy and alliance with each other.

"But what still puzzles me," I said, "is why they made this attack on me. I don't so much as know them, and I don't believe they know me."

"I could not understand it at first," she told me, "though I had some suspicion, and from what I have heard since it seems they mistook you for somebody else in the darkness, and do not even now know that they were mistaken."

"And who is this somebody else? Where is he?"

"He was expected here last night, but did not come, and nothing has been heard of him."

Going on to explain matters to me more in detail, she quite casually mentioned the name of this expected guest who had failed to arrive, and the mere hearing of it was as if a key to much that was hitherto incomprehensible had been suddenly placed in my hands.

CHAPTER XIII:

The Other Man.

"GRAHAM STANTON!" I echoed. "Yes." She looked at me inquiringly. "Do you know him?"

"I know of him," I said, sending my thoughts back over what Alice had told me of the man she loved. "I heard of him shortly before I left London, and was told that his guardian was a farmer in Sussex, but it never crossed my mind till this moment—I suppose Mr. Chardon is his guardian?"

"Yes."

"I see. And you expected him yesterday, but he didn't arrive?"

"He did not arrive," she said, with an air of significance, "and you were mistaken for him."

"You mean," I faltered, aghast, "that they deliberately planned to murder him?"

"I don't know," her voice quavered; she was replacing the bandages on my head, and I could not see her face; "it seems impossible, yet I'm afraid it must have been so."

"There is more in this than I understand," said I, "unless it is that—" Details of the story Alice had confided to me were recurring to my memory. "Stanton had fulfilled certain conditions of his father's will, hadn't he, and was coming to see Mr. Chardon about taking possession of his estate?"

"He would have come some weeks ago, I think," Doris made answer, "but my father—Mr. Chardon—has been putting him off, till at last he spoke about instructing a lawyer. Then Mr. Chardon wrote saying he had been preparing the accounts and they were now ready, and if Mr. Stanton would spend his usual holiday here, he would get the family lawyer to come over, and everything could be satisfactorily concluded."

"And Stanton wrote to say he would arrive yesterday?"

"He said his holiday commenced yesterday, and he should be here by a train that reached Newhaven a little after eight last night."

"I cannot help fearing," she went on, "that things have been going wrong here for a long while past. Mr. Chardon has always been kind to me, and I cannot bear to bring any harm upon him, but such terrible things will happen, I am afraid, if he is not prevented, that, for his own sake, I must do something before it is too late."

"From what he has told my mother, and what I have heard him saying to my brother, I believe he has lost all his own and a good deal of Mr. Stanton's money in speculations of some kind. He made up his mind that Mr. Stanton would never do what was necessary to entitle him to the estate, and has all along been treating it as if it belonged to himself. Lately, the thought of having to confess that he had misused so much of it, and having to part, too, with the remainder and leave himself penniless, seems to have driven him almost out of his mind. He does not like Mr. Stanton; he has never tried to be friendly with him; and is in dread of being prosecuted for fraud, my mother says."

"This has worried him so that he has taken to drinking very heavily. He has always had a weakness that way, but for more than a month now he has never been sober. He is constantly drinking brandy, and on some days has gone storming about the farm in such a state that we have all been terrified of him. I don't know why, I had a vague uneasiness all yesterday. I had noticed him and my brother walking in the fields yesterday and the day before, arguing very earnestly, and occasionally as if they were quarreling; they spoke softly and looked round often, as if to be sure nobody was near enough to overhear them. They were strange and restless in the house, too, and I had a feeling that something was wrong, but what could I do?"

"I had a presentiment that they were planning something secretly, and that it had to do with Mr. Stanton, but I never dreamt it was anything so terrible as I now know that it was. How could I? I thought I knew them so well, seeing them every day as I have done for so long; and they have seemed no worse than ordinary men.

"They went out yesterday evening, directly after I came in, and said they were going to Rottingdean; they often spend Saturday evenings with some friends there; and I wondered whether my father was only going because he was anxious to keep out of Mr. Stanton's way. Even when they were so late coming back, I thought, at first, that he was purposely keeping out so that Mr. Stanton might have gone to bed when he came in, because he did not care to meet him.

"As the hours passed, I was not in the least alarmed about Mr. Stanton—he was always unpunctual and uncertain—but I began to have dreadful fears about my father. I imagined something terrible had happened to him; that he had become desperate and taken his own life; or that he and my brother had escaped out of the country, and would be arrested by-and-by and brought back by the police.

"It was only when I heard a knocking and saw you at the door—the blood on your hands and face—that all in a flash I seemed to know what had happened, and——"

Her voice trembled into silence, and I thought she would have broken down; but she had herself resolutely under control again before I could interpose.

"After what has happened, anything seems possible," she added quickly. "Mr.

Stanton has not come yet; nothing has been heard of him, and—— Oh, I dare not think of it!"

* * *

CHAPTER XIV.

Love in the Midst of Alarms.

I DON'T deny that it was unreasonable in me, and inhuman, to resent her expressing such an acute concern for Graham Stanton; but maybe I was vaguely and stupidly jealous, and, moreover, felt that as I had, though unwittingly, saved the other man's life at some risk of my own, I was entitled to all her sympathy.

"I can't see that you need be anxious about him," I demurred; "they mistook me for Mr. Stanton, and haven't found out yet that they were mistaken. If they had come upon him first, they would never have attacked me. And if they have met with him since, they would know they had previously got hold of the wrong man, and you say they don't know that?"

"I don't think they do," she said: "Evidently from what I overheard them saying, they took you for Mr. Stanton and cannot make out what has become of him. They are afraid he recognised them, and has gone back to Newhaven, and they are every minute expecting the police. I can see from their manner how nervous and uneasy they are."

"Very well, then," said I. "That makes it clear that they have done no harm to Mr. Stanton. I am the only one who has suffered. But I don't mind," I went on, and then a side-glimpse of her face struck me with a peculiar shyness, and, instead of completing what I had begun, I concluded lamely: "I am glad, though, that he is not your father—such a man as that!"

"But he has always been very good to me," she hastened to say in his defence. "He is a little harsh at times, but not unkind, and he could not have thought of doing what he has done if he had not been worried."

"But there is his son. He seems to have been as bad as the father."

"He has been scared into it. He is too—too harmless and cowardly to have taken part in it if he had not been compelled, but he is entirely under his father's influence."

"But that is no excuse——"

"There is no excuse," she interrupted emphatically; "and when I think of it I

hate them both !” Her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed angrily, but the next moment she was calm again. “Only he is mad with disappointment, and fear, and drink. He has worked himself into such a state that he does not care now what he does so long as he can escape exposure and disgrace. I am not trying to excuse him, but somehow—he has always been kind to me—and I can’t help feeling a little sorry for him, too, and if you could forgive him——”

“I have forgiven him everything,” I cried fervently, “for—for your sake. I could not punish him without bringing trouble on you, and I would forgive him if he were ten times as guilty sooner than do that.”

My looks and tone even more than my words must have told her how deeply in earnest I was, and she was so relieved by my clemency, or touched at my eager consideration of herself, that quite suddenly she put her hands over her face, and her piteous little sobbings went to my heart.

I started to my feet, yearning with pity towards her and a feeling that was stronger and more tender than any pity. I longed passionately to gather her into my arms and protect her from the cares and the miseries that were all about her. I hardly know what wild, perfervid things I said to her, but I do know that I was most humbly and absolutely in earnest, and though she silenced me with a glance and a light touch of her hand on my arm, I felt that she divined my utter sincerity and was, at least, not displeased with me ; was perhaps even a little comforted by my sympathy as I was by hers.

From that hour I date a certain tacit understanding that soon ripened between us. It was no place and no time for me to be talking of what I had in my heart to say to her, but from the broken word or two of it that I faltered out then I believe she translated all the rest ; for though she answered me neither one way nor the other, from that hour, in some subtle, indescribable fashion we seemed to be on a different footing towards each other ; it was as if some inner knowledge we had gave each of us an intangible right to rely implicitly upon the other.

Her giving way to tears was but a momentary weakness, and we were presently discussing very composedly our plans for the immediate future.

“I am feeling stronger. I am well enough to go now,” I said, “if you think it best.”

But she doubted whether it would be wise for me to go before the morrow.

“The wound is healing ; it does not look as if it would be very troublesome ; and with another day’s rest you will be more fit to take care of yourself,” she considered. “Besides, you could not leave the house to-day without my father or my brother seeing you, and though in broad daylight and with others within hearing, you would not think he would risk interfering with you, he is so unlike himself there is no knowing what mad act he might be goaded into at the sight of you.”

“If I were to slip out quietly to-night——”

“But if he should happen to hear and follow. It would be more terrible by night, and all round here is so lonely. It would be far better—if you don’t mind—to wait till the morning, then while they are away at work in the hayfield I could get you out of the house unseen.”

I saw that she was right ; perhaps, too, I was in no hurry to banish myself from her ; and so readily fell in with her suggestion.

She repeated all her adjurations to silence and caution the more impressively because early in the evening she would have to go, as usual, into Rottingdean to church with her mother, and in the meantime I should be alone in the place with my two enemies and one of the servants.

I declared that she need be under no apprehension, that I should keep quiet and be perfectly safe there until she came back ; but I could not, of course, foresee the events of the next few hours, or I should not have spoken so confidently, and she would not have been so easily reassured.

CHAPTER XV:

I Am Discovered.

WHEN she was gone, the time hung heavily on my hands again.

I soon satiated the indolent curiosity that led me to root among the rubbish that was stored in the garret, and sleep held aloof from me, though I lay for hours with my eyes shut, trying my hardest to forget everything.

I forgot my dangers, past, present, and to come, but I could not forget Doris. I could not shut her out of my mind any more than I could have shut her out of my heart. I loved her ; I said it over and over to myself, and was never tired of saying it.

There were rapturous moments when, recalling some look or word of hers, I carried my dreams with me up into a seventh heaven of hope and hovered there dizzily, amazed and awed at my daring; and there were black intervals when I fell headlong into the abyss and groveled in despair, sneering at myself for a vain fool, and miserably convincing myself that one so adorable must needs have many lovers, and that among them there must surely be a worthier than I, and that if ever I had courage to ask her, she would own that it was so, and be sorry for me.

Buffeted in such a tempest of windy hopes and doubts I could not sleep, so I got up and looked out of the window.

I had pushed it open, and, as I stood brooding, with the soft air cooling my face, I grew aware of a smell of tobacco smoke. Leaning a little forward, I could see the yard below, and in it the loitering figures of Mr. Chardon and his son.

They strolled moodily, pausing at intervals, and gazing this way and that across the vast expanse of open country.

"He may be lying yonder," the old man was pointing with the stem of his pipe, and his harsh growl reached me clearly through the quiet gloaming, "under them bushes. He couldn't ha' gone far, in the state he was in. As like as not he's dropped down somewhere hereabouts an' past tellin' tales, so long as it's no stranger that happens to find him. If we could lay hands on him an' put him out o' sight, there'd be an end of this worry."

"But we looked everywhere last night," observed the other.

"We thought we did. But this sort o' thing's always found in the one place you've overlooked."

"I wish to Heaven we'd never done it! I can't get it out of my head," said the son. "I couldn't sleep for it last night, and I've looked round a dozen times thinkin' I heard him behind me, and I keep seein' him everywhere. That bush in the field up there, it seemed to be moving just now, and it turned me hot all over—I thought it was him making his way round to us."

"Take a deal more than that to turn me hot!" sneered the old man, with an air of half-drunken bravado. "If he isn't lyin' harmless out o' the way somewhere, I'd sooner he did make his way round to us. It's his gettin' away an' doin' us a mischief

among others that troubles me; if he didn't recognise us an' comes on here—why, I shall know how to take care of him, an' ourselves too."

"If he's anywhere alive, I'm thankful. I swear I'll never lift a hand agenst him agen."

"You'll do as I bid ye, yer blighted young fool!" cried the old man, with a fierce oath. "I've got too much at stake to be squeamish. If he falls into my hands agen, by George, I'll see to it this time that he doesn't slip through my fingers. I couldn't give him all his own, not if I was to ruin myself. I've got to save myself from bankruptcy an' a felon's cell—that's what I'm playing for, an', by Heaven! I play to win, when it's a game of that sort. Don't you think you're goin' to thwart me with yer namby-pamby frights! Don't you try it. It'll not pay yer. You're in this with me, an' you'll share my winnings, an' you'll share the other thing if we don't win. You've gone too far to back out an' leave me in the lurch, an' if ye try it on, I'll round on ye, an' drag ye in with me, flesh o' mine as you are."

He said it with a suppressed passion that cowed the other into submission.

"But you needn't be afeared," Mr. Chardon added, calming as abruptly as he was roused. "I don't for a minute think there'll be any call to do the job over agen. I'm convinced in my own mind he's dropped down an' quiet enough in some hole on the Downs, if we could light on him an' put him away. If he hadn't recognised us, he'd have come straight here, after he bolted. If he did recognise us, he'd have made for Newhaven or Rottingdean, an' afore this the police would have been here. Very well, then! The only thing is, he must have partly revived, cleared off, an' then collapsed yonder somewhere, an' there's an end of him, or will be when we've nosed him out an' tucked him up. We'll have another look round for him. Wait here a bit, while I change my boots."

He slouched towards the back door, and I lost sight of him.

By this time the shadow of the house stretched its longest and lankest in the sunset, and the distances were dim with the oncoming of night. In the shadow of the house young Chardon loitered gloomily. Now he stood at gaze, with his back towards me; now he paused and glanced at the door, as if expecting the return of his father.

And suddenly in one pause he looked up:

(The conclusion of this thrilling story will appear next month.)

Bertie Vereker's Reward. ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By EDWARD H. LEBENS.

A story which well illustrates the old adage: "Sweet are the uses of adversity."

ON a certain morning Tom Dumfries and Bertie Vereker were seated smoking and further amusing themselves by watching the pedestrians who passed before the window of the Metropole Club.

Bertie Vereker had mild blue eyes and fair hair, slightly wavy. His face had an effeminate look, and his frame was slight. His clothes were strictly in fashion; his gloves, held loosely in his hand, were of the finest quality; his linen was immaculate. His coat was buttoned to the last button; his trousers were creased and carefully turned up at the bottom, showing a pair of tan boots which fitted to a nicety his slender feet. He was smoking a cigarette.

Dumfries was negligently rather than neatly dressed, though his clothes were of the finest texture. His hat was on the back of his head, showing his high, intellectual forehead, and thick, black hair. His coat, thrown open, showed his broad chest and athletic form. His well-formed hand, browned from the Summer sun, held a fragrant Havana.

Dumfries went under the sobriquet of the "self-made man." He was not self-made, for he had inherited a vast fortune from his father, but the sobriquet was his, and was founded probably on the ability which he displayed in business operations and on 'Change. His elders shook their heads approvingly, and predicted his success in life.

"As though from their standpoint of pounds and shillings his success had not been assured many times before his career was begun," thought Bertie, as he looked out of the window.

Not that he wished to disparage Dumfries. He himself considered Dumfries a remarkable man, and had no doubt but what, were he poor to-day, in a short time he would be able to amass another fortune,

and his sobriquet would then be deserved. He appreciated this ability in Dumfries the more because he thought that were he penniless to-day he would be penniless for ever. He would probably be dead in a few weeks, for he would shoot himself.

He knew nothing of business operations, and really didn't see much harm in being ignorant on the subject. So far as his desires were concerned, his fortune was many times too much already. As it was one of the largest fortunes in existence, he personally saw no reason for increasing it, and hence he cared little that he was ignorant of business methods. But there was a certain Miss Carlyle, who had a pale face and brown eyes, and brown hair, inclined to be stubborn, who had told him often that "she positively adored business men like Dumfries." She had told him so the evening before at the Herberts'.

She had led the cotillon with Dumfries. She had been ultra vivacious all the evening, and he had been correspondingly dejected—though no one could know that, so mild did he look. He had gone on the broad verandah to solace himself with a cigarette, and there he had come on Miss Carlyle and Dumfries, quite unexpectedly. Dumfries was speaking passionately. Of course he was proposing.

"Yes," he thought, as though it were a thing of the past, "I wish I had known all about business on 'Change, and speculating, and all that sort of rubbish. Funny a girl should care for that."

"You proposed to Miss Carlyle at the Herberts' last evening, didn't you?" asked Bertie, breaking the silence.

"Why, yes," said Dumfries, looking much surprised.

"I thought you had. I'd like to congratulate you, Dumfries." In Bertie's eyes a sadness seemed to mingle with the mildness, as he held out his soft, white hand.

"Congratulate me on what? On proposing?" Dumfries laughed ironically, but changed at once. "Excuse me. Thank you, Bertie," he said, "but you will keep it quiet. No one is supposed to know of it until it is formally announced."

"You may rely on me, Dumfries," said Bertie.

"Yes, I'm sure I can," said Dumfries: Bertie was certainly no gossip.

The following evening, in the library of the Carlyles' house a subdued light was shed by the enormous reading lamp. Its rays fell on the aristocratic face of Frederic Carlyle, pale as death, his lips drawn. On the bearskin at his feet knelt his wife.

For many months the affairs of Mr. Carlyle had been in a very bad way, as his business colleagues well knew. He had been speculating. "Speculating wildly," said one. "Speculating without judgment," said another. "Simply speculating, that was bad enough," said a third. But all united in saying that he was to feel the result. And they spoke truly, for by three o'clock the following day Mr. Carlyle would be a beggar.

To his wife he had said nothing until now concerning his ventures. She lay on the rug convulsively grasping her husband's hands and moaning: "Oh, Fred, why didn't you tell me before?" After a time she became more composed and glanced at his face. Anguish and remorse were written there.

"I've got friends, Helen, I'll be on my feet again shortly. I'll—I'll surely not be forsaken by everybody." He groaned as he thought of these friends. He had been to see them all. They had been cold as steel. One of them, his college chum, expecting a visit from him, had instructed his clerks to say he was out of town, and when he had met Mr. Carlyle in the street a few minutes after, had looked coldly over his head as they passed.

Mrs. Carlyle soon changed from supported to supporter; throwing her arms round his neck she said:

"Fred, believe me, I will be as happy with you in poverty as I was in wealth."

* * * * *

The door bell rang. Tom, the footman, opened the front door and Agnes Carlyle came in.

"Won't you come in and warm yourself?" she said, addressing Mr. Dumfries.

"Why, thank you," said he, and they entered the library.

"Mamma, what's the matter?" cried Agnes in frightened anxiety.

"Dear, are you home?" said Mrs. Carlyle. "I didn't hear the door bell ring. Sit down, Mr. Dumfries."

"By Jove," thought Dumfries, "there's some truth in that rumour after all, the old man's bankrupt."

Mr. Carlyle rose. His strong mind seemed to have come to his assistance.

"Agnes, whatever the world may think, I believe you will love your father?"

"Yes, papa," and she looked at him expectantly.

"Mr. Dumfries, you are on 'Change a good deal, you have heard some rumours lately?"

"I have," said Dumfries, "but I've hoped they were false."

"Well, they're not." Looking shamefacedly at his daughter and leaning on his wife weakly he said: "I'm a poor man; I'm a bankrupt." He pulled himself together at once, however:

"Of course, you understand, Dumfries, what can save me?"

"Yes," said Dumfries hesitatingly. "I—I think so; ready money."

"Money, ready money, is it exactly: Money that I can pay down to-morrow before three o'clock would save me." He paused for some time. "Would save Ag—"

Agnes, her brown eyes flashing, put her hand over his grey moustache.

"Of course," said Dumfries, fumbling his gloves nervously as he paused to think. If he were sure he could get Agnes—but he was not. If she had not refused him—but she had.

"Of course," he began again, "there's a chance of the money being engulfed with the other, but I suppose your business friends will help you out."

Agnes stepped in front of her father: Her brown eyes seemed afire.

"Mr. Dumfries, father doesn't, nor do I care for your suppositions or your sympathy, but if you are warm now you may leave."

Bertie stood at the club window next morning. His coat fitted his slender figure exactly. His trousers were creased and rolled up at the bottom as usual. The slender fingers of his left hand held the morning paper and his gloves. His mild, blue eyes looked at the traffic passing along the roadway. He was thinking very deeply. Not that anyone would have

known it; his face was undisturbed. It had its usual tranquil look. But he was, nevertheless, thinking, and strange as it might seem, his thoughts caused him much pain. He was thinking of a pair of brown eyes, of a slight figure. And he loved their possessor, but she did not love him. There was no doubt about these two facts: Was she not going to marry Dumfries?

"Hello, Bertie," said Dumfries at this instant:

Bertie turned round leisurely: "How do you do, Dumfries?"

"Have you heard the news about Carlyle?" said Dumfries:

"I—I don't know, what is it?"

"Why, haven't you heard the rumour that's been going about? He's a bankrupt, a beggar."

Bertie looked at him, his eyes just as mild, his face just as tranquil as when he was looking out of the window into the street: "But how do you know he is a bankrupt?" he asked:

"Why, I was there last evening. He has to have money, and I don't believe he can get it. To lend it to him would be throwing good money after bad. I know the situation."

Bertie's thoughts were running like this: "I always knew Dumfries was a cad. He intends to let Carlyle come a cropper."

"I say, Dumfries," he said calmly, "you're mistaken. Carlyle came in for some money this morning he was not expecting, and it will cover all he owes. Good-bye, Dumfries. I have an engagement."

Bertie walked slowly to the writing room: Quite leisurely he opened two buttons of his coat, and from his inside pocket took a cheque-book. Drawing a chair to one of the tables he sat down: His mild eyes followed the pen point along the blank he was filling:

"Pay to the order of Frederic Carlyle the sum of two hundred thousand pounds." He paused a few seconds: "I'm glad I'm worth more than people think I am." His pen was writing, "Bertram Vereker."

Upon a sheet of the club's embossed paper he now wrote a few lines, and while he sealed the envelope which inclosed the cheque and the note he said softly to himself: "Poor business proposition, perhaps, but it must be done delicately."

Carlyle was saved. His colleagues said: "Some fool gave him the money, and his luck with it." For Carlyle made thousands

out of what might have been complete bankruptcy. No one knew how it happened: Agnes Carlyle herself did not know for a long time, and then she thought she knew what kept Bertie Vereker from her home:

It was shortly after his Uncle Haverdale died, leaving him, as young Herbert said, in the language of the day: "Nothing but a cool million," that Bertie received a letter: Inasmuch as a small gilt monogram which embellished the paper was composed of the initials A. and O., Bertie took hold of his hat on the extreme edge of the rim to assure himself that it was perfectly straight before doing anything else. His pink carnation was exactly in position:

The note was very short. It read

DEAR MR. VEREKER,—

Will you not call upon me as soon as you can spare the time?

AGNES CARLYLE.

It was Saturday morning, and he could spare the time at once, and it was not very long after that Bertie was shown across the tiled hall by Tom. Agnes soon appeared, and blushing held out her hand to him:

"I wrote to you because you stopped coming to see—to see us, and because I know why you stopped, and because I think you are so noble, and because—and because I'm so sorry I tried to make you jealous at the Herberts', and because I—I love——" She paused, and as she seemed to be so very much embarrassed Bertie said:

"I hear Dumfries has gone abroad. I suppose he will be away all the Winter?"

Agnes looked up, slightly chagrined and much disappointed: "I don't know anything about Mr. Dumfries. I never did like him, but tolerated him because papa thought he was nice."

As he watched Agnes' disappointed look Bertie appeared just as tranquil as ever. His eyes were mild as usual. He thought, "Dumfries is a prevaricator," and rising he went to Agnes, and stood before her a few seconds, while his mild eyes looked into her brown ones:

"Agnes—Agnes, I love you dearly."

She blushed and rose, and then he put his arm round her waist.

"Will you be my wife, Agnes?" She reached up her head, and kissed him, and then she laid her brown hair, inclined to be stubborn, on his pink carnation, and he kissed the brown hair, and they were happy beyond expression ever after.

EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS NEW FEATURE:

Thrilling Escapes.

Who has not experienced a thrill when reading well-told accounts of escapes from wild beasts, from burning houses, from floods, from prisons, from savages, from sinking ships, and other unpleasant situations too numerous to mention? In this feature the works of the greatest writers of the past are made to yield their toll of such exciting happenings. Each extract forms a miniature story, and is perfectly intelligible without reference to the book from which it is taken.

THE ESCAPE FROM THE CHÂTEAU D'IF.

From "*The Count of Monte Cristo*," by ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

(Published by John Dicks.)

At the date of the opening of the story (1814-15) Napoleon was a prisoner in Elba, and the Bourbons were restored to power.

Edmond Dantès, the hero, a young sailor of nineteen, is falsely accused of attempting to aid Napoleon to escape, and is arrested while eating his betrothal dinner. He is imprisoned in a dungeon of the Château d'If, and while in prison manages to loosen a stone in the wall of his cell, and gain access by night to the next cell in which an old man, the Abbé Faria, is confined. They become friends, and the Abbé tells Dantès of a vast hidden treasure. They plan an escape in order to obtain it, but on the eve of the escape the Abbé dies.

The following extract tells how Dantès manages to get away from the prison alone in a most original and exciting manner, and the rest of the story gives his adventures as the Count of Monte Cristo—a name he assumes after finding the Abbé's hidden treasure.

IT was six o'clock in the morning, and the dawn was breaking, so that the faint light struggling into the cell paled the poor flame of the good-Abbé's feeble little lamp.

Strange, inexplicable shadows had been passing over the face as the flame of the lamp or candle flickered, and prompted poor Dantès, despite his commonsense, to think his friend was returning to life.

But when the struggle between night and day was at an end—when as much light as ever entered that dreary cell filtered through the prison bars, Dantès could deceive himself no more.

He was alone in the world with his dead friend. : : :

He stooped, prayed, kissed the dead face, and prepared for his own safety.

First he extinguished the lamp and placed it in its ordinary hiding-place; and then he fled, closing the passage as well as he could on the other side, and so he went to his own more solitary cell.

It was time, for as he entered he heard the gaoler's heavy footstep.

As it happened, this morning he began his round at Dantès' cell, and thence went to the prison occupied by Faria. . . .

Now, Dantès was seized with an uncontrollable desire to learn what was happening in the cell where lay the remains of his unfortunate friend. He therefore hurried along the passage, and reached the other end as the gaoler must have opened the door, for the next moment the man was shouting for help.

Other gaolers were now to be heard approaching, followed by the unmistakable tramp habitual to the soldier even when off duty.

Then arrived the governor.

Edmond heard all these things—the creaking of the bed as they moved the body to examine it, the voice of the governor directing them to cast cold water upon the prisoner's face, and then a pause, followed by the governor ordering that a doctor should be fetched.

Then the light footsteps of the governor were heard retreating, and Dantès knew that his friend was being watched merely by his gaolers:

Now and again some word of pity, for which Dantès was grateful, fell upon his ear, but they were overweighted by the brutal laughter and smart repartees of the more hardened turnkeys: : : :

Soon the voices ceased, and he supposed that the cell was left to its ghastly occupant. But Dantès dared not remove the stone, for it occurred to him that a single turnkey might have been left to watch the corpse:

He, therefore, remained perfectly still, holding his breath even.

It was perhaps after an hour had passed that he heard distant footsteps, which gradually increased in volume.

Ha! the governor, attended by the doctor and others: : : :

Then words and questions began to flow. The doctor set out the symptoms of the malady to which the prisoner had succumbed, and pronounced him quite dead—dead for hours: : : :

"His name was Faria—was it not?" asked a voice, which Dantès assumed to be that of some subaltern officer.

"Yes," was the reply, "and when he said it was an ancient name he spoke truly: He was also learned, and quite rational upon all points but the one of his hidden treasure. But upon that one subject he was incontestibly mad."

"Ha!" replied the doctor, "it is a shape of insanity which we in the profession of medicine style monomania."

"So you never had to make a complaint about him, eh?" asked the governor of the Abbé's gaoler:

"Never, monsieur—never. Nay, on the other hand, he sometimes lightened me an hour by telling me about this or that; and, indeed, one day when my wife was ill, and I told him the symptoms, he told me how to cure her—and cured she was."

"Ha, ha!" said the doctor in a piqued voice, "I was not aware that I had a rival in the Château d'If. I trust, governor, that, as a compeer of mine, you will treat his remains with all due respect."

"Make your mind easy," said the governor, in a satirical tone: "He shall be very honourably interred in the newest sack there is in the prison." : : : :

Now, after a pause, Dantès' trained ears detected the rustle of some coarse textile fabric being dragged over the floor of the

cell, then the bed creaked as though a weight were being moved upon it, and this was followed by a thud, as though a heavy something had dropped suddenly: Then once more there was a thud, and the bedstead creaked more loudly than before.

Dantès had no need to be told—they had thrust the body of his friend into a sack and thrown sack and contents upon the bed. : : :

"This evening," said the governor, when all was finished:

"What time?" asked the turnkey:

"Ten to eleven."

"Shall we watch the body?"

"To what good end? Shut him up, just as though he were alive, and come away."

The steps retreated, and the voices died away in the distance. Then came the sound of a door creaking on its hinges, followed by the grinding of bolts shot into their sockets, more departing footsteps, and then utter silence and solitude—the silence and solitude of death.

The stillness struck like an icy breath upon the young sailor, and chilled his whole body:

A little, and he raised the flagstone cautiously with his head and looked round the chamber:

No living thing was there, and so Dantès entered, and once more stood near his one friend.

There on the bed, stretched at full length, and faintly lighted by the dim light which alone reached that miserable cell, was to be seen a sack of coarse canvas, below the loose folds of which was to be seen a long and rigid body:

This was Faria's winding-sheet—one which, as the turnkey had predicted, cost very little:

All was over:

The last earthly separation had taken place between Dantès and his good old friend who had saved him from death: : : :

He sat him down on the edge of that terrible death-bed and thought out what was to be done:

Alone—he was once more alone!

Again he must fall back into silence!

He found himself once more face to face with the desolation of mere nothingness:

Alone—never again to see the only human being who had made life possible: No, never again to hear the beautiful voice which had taught him almost all he knew:

Was it not better than to live—to follow swiftly after Faria, and even risk the offended

Majesty of Heaven by a self-imposed death, than to remain alone—ever alone?

That thought of suicide, the weight of which his friend had lifted from his heart, and which he had forgotten utterly while Faria lived, now came back upon him in the presence of the horror which his noble friend had now become.

"If I died," he thought, "I should follow him, wherever he may be, and assuredly I would find him: But how to die?"

He soon thought of a method. "It will be easy," he said, smiling bitterly. "I will stay here, fall upon the first man who crosses the threshold, and strangle him. Then they will behead me and all will be done."

But it often happens in the great storms of life, as in tempests upon the great ocean of waters, the abyss is found between high and far-soaring waves. So now Dantès, in a moment, rose high and higher from the idea of death, and, cresting the wave, he experienced an absorbing thirst for life and liberty.

"Die—no," he thought, "I will not die now, after having lived so long—after having suffered so much! Yes—I would have willingly died those years since, but now to expire would be, indeed, to yield to destiny. I *will* live; I will fight to the very last—I will regain the happiness of which I have been so unjustly deprived! Die—never! For have I not my executioners to punish—and may I not have some friends to reward? Meanwhile I am forgotten and left here—and I may end in my dungeon as Faria has ended."

Now, as he thought thus, suddenly he became motionless, while his eyes shone as those of a man suddenly seized with some new, dazzling, and overmastering thought.

He stood up, passed his hand over his forehead, as if to clear the amazement from his brain—then paced several times round the cell—then turned abruptly once more to the bed.

"Ha!" he asked himself. "Who sends me this idea? Lord, is it Thou? Since 'tis but the dead who are released from this dungeon, if I would be free I must take the place of the dead!"

Not permitting himself time to deliberate, and acting at once, so that he might not allow his commonsense to persuade him against his wild scheme, he bent over the ghastly sack, and ripped up its sewed-up mouth with the sharp knife that Faria had manufactured.

He now drew the corpse from the sack,

and dragged the remains of his good friend along the passage to his own cell, where he laid it on the bed, placed about and over the head the handkerchief he himself wore at night-time, and which was known to the gaoler. Then he covered the body with his counterpane. : : :

And now he turned the face to the wall, so that the gaoler when he came in with the evening meal might suppose he was asleep—as indeed Dantès frequently had pretended to be when the hated attendant arrived.

Now he left the cell by the opening behind the bedstead, drew the bedstead in question close up to the wall, so that it had its usual appearance, and returned to the Abbé's cell.

Now he took from their hiding-place the famous needle and thread, flung off his poor clothing that the gaolers might only feel flesh beneath their hands when they came for the body, hid his rags, and, getting into the sack, he lay down upon the bed, and proceeded to sew up the head of the sack.

With him, fixed in the waistband of his drawers, was the Abbé Faria's sharp knife. : : :

Should the gaolers, while they were conveying him to the graveyard, discover that they were carrying a living, and not a dead body, he decided not to give them time to recognise the fact. With a sudden slice of the knife he meant to open the sack from top to bottom, leap out, and, before they could recover from their alarm, leap over the nearest rampart, and so to the sea; if they followed him, then, and then only, he would use his knife.

Should they get him to the graveyard without suspicion, he determined to allow them to throw over him a little earth, and then, under cover of the night, relieve himself from his sack and avoid the mould as much as possible—so finally escape when they had turned their backs. He argued that they would throw but little earth upon a prisoner, and that they were too careless to dig a deep grave.

But if he should not escape thus from the grave, why, then he would be killed, and so an end to him. At least he would have escaped from the crime of suicide.

Dantès had eaten nothing since the previous evening, but as he had thought of neither hunger nor thirst, and as he lay waiting for his deliverers, he wanted neither food nor drink:

There he lay, thinking over the chances. His first risk took the shape of the danger there was that the gaoler, when he came at seven o'clock with his supper, might be in a civil mood and speak to him.

But fortunately, of late, Dantès had, two evenings out of three, been found in bed by the gaoler; and as Dantès had sometimes not answered him recently, the man, when finding Dantès in bed, said no word, but just planked down his food, and, without a word, went his way.

But this time the gaoler might speak, might even insist upon an answer, and then he would be discovered.

It was as seven o'clock sounded that Dantès' agony commenced:

With one hand placed over his heart to stay its beating, and the other wiping the perspiration from his brow, he listened for the first signs of alarm.

Now and again a shuddering seized him, which he feared might betray him when they came for the dead man.

Then suddenly this heart would cease to beat:

But the supper had passed without the alarm being sounded, and so far he was safe. He had escaped his first great danger. It was a good augury.

At last—it was the hour the governor had named—footsteps were heard approaching the cell.

Dantès knew that the moment of either death or deliverance had arrived, and summoning all his courage he held his breath, and tried to stop the beating of his heart.

The steps halted at the door. They were those of two or three men, evidently the grave-diggers come to bury him: There was no longer any doubt, for the door opened and a dim light reached Dantès' eyes, and through the coarse sacking that covered him he saw two shadows approach the bed, while a third, holding a torch, remained outside the door.

The two men, who seemed to Dantès to be half-drunk (which perhaps was fortunate, for in that condition they were less likely to notice things about them) approached the bed and raised the sack, each being at one end.

"He is heavy though for so thin and old a man," muttered the man at the head of the sack.

"It is said that every year a man lives he adds half-a-pound to the weight of his bones. Know you that?" asked he who was lifting the feet.

"Is the knot tied?" asked the first speaker:

"Where would be the use of carrying so much more weight? I can do that when we get to the place."

"Right!" said the other.

Meanwhile Dantès was tormenting his brain to know what the "knot" was for.

The gaolers now flung the supposed corpse upon a hand-bier, Edmond stiffening himself as they lifted him from the bed, the better to play the part of a dead man.

The man with the torch now led the way upstairs, the two men carrying the bier following.

Suddenly Dantès felt the fresh night air passing over his body, and, as a sailor, he recognised the wind styled in those latitudes the *Mistral*:

He knew not whether it was a greater delight or agony to recall the old sensation of the wind playing round him:

Twenty paces—then a halt.

Now the bearers put down the bier; one of them ran off, and Dantès heard his fading footfalls in the distance.

"Where am I?" thinks Dantès.

"Truly, now, he is no light load," mutters the remaining bearer, sitting on the edge of the bier.

Dantès now asks himself if the moment for escape has come? But fortunately he thinks better of this determination.

"Here, you," suddenly calls a voice from a distance. "Show a light, or I can't find what I am looking for."

The man with the torch hurries away, although not very civilly invited to do so.

"What has he gone for?" asks Dantès of himself. "Mayhap the spade!"

"Ha! found at last!" says the same voice, returning, "but not without trouble."

"Humph!" is the reply. "Nothing has been lost by waiting."

So speaking, the man draws near to Dantès, who hears something heavy drop near him, and at the same moment a cord is fastened round his feet with a sudden wrench:

"So, then, is the knot tied?"

"Yes, as fast as grim death."

"Forward, then!"

The bier is lifted once more, and the group proceed:

Fifty paces this time are counted by Dantès, then there is a halt to open a door or gate, and then on again:

Dantès now hears the beat of the waves

dashing against the rocks on which the Château d'If stands.

"Bad weather," says one of the grave-diggers, "and not a pleasant hour for a plunge in the sea."

"Yes, the Abbé runs a chance of getting wet," says the other.

Then follows a rattle of laughter.

Dantès does not follow the joke, but his hair stands on end.

"So here we are at last," says a voice, "yet a step further on—a mere step, for you know that the last did not take to the water, and was dashed on the rocks: Dost recall what the governor said next morn when the report came in?"

A pause—then four or five steps were ascended.

Now Dantès feels himself taken up by the head and heels, and swung backwards and forwards:

"Go!" at last says a voice:

The next moment Dantès feels himself flung away into the air; then, as a wounded bird falling through the air, he is descending like an arrow:

And yet the second or so seems a century: At last!

With a terrific splash he is cast down—down into the icy waves.

As he touches the water he utters a piercing cry, stifled the next moment as he disappears below the waters.

Thus has Dantès gained his liberty, by being flung into the sea, into whose depths he is dragged by a thirty-six pound shot tied to his feet:

It is the sea which is the graveyard of the Château d'If:

Giddy and almost suffocated as he was, Dantès retained enough presence of mind to hold his breath: Already the knife was in his hand, and as he touched the water he ripped the sack up longways, and so freed his arm and a portion of his body:

But meanwhile, in spite of all his efforts to free himself from the shot, he was still being dragged down, down by its implacable weight:

Suddenly, however, he flung his body downwards, and thrusting the knife before him, passed its sharp edge between his feet:

The next moment he felt the shot dragging the sack from him, and he struck upwards through the water, whilst the sack sank into the blue depths of the Mediterranean:

THE ESCAPE FROM THE INDIANS.

From "*The Last of the Mohicans*," by J. FENIMORE COOPER.

(Published by George Routledge & Sons, Limited).

"*The Last of the Mohicans*," which tells of the struggle for supremacy between the white invaders and the Redskins in 1757, was J. Fenimore Cooper's fourth novel, and its title has passed into an everyday saying. Its author's own life was eventful, and gave him an opportunity of studying the scenes he has depicted so well in his sea-tales, and stories of frontier life, for his boyhood was spent in the wild frontier region of Cooperstown. On being expelled from College for some slight misconduct he shipped as a common sailor, and afterwards entered the navy and rose to the rank of lieutenant.

The following extract relates the adventures of a party of white people (consisting of Cora and Alice Munro, Major Duncan Heyward, and David Gamut, a singing-master,) who fall into the hands of Redskins (Hurons and Mingoes) under the leadership of Magua, (le Renard Subtil), who bears a grudge against the father of Cora and Alice: The whites were originally accompanied by three friendly Redskins of the Mohican and Delaware tribes, named Chingachgook (le Gros Serpent), his son, Uncas (le Cerf Agile), and Hawk-eye, but they had departed for assistance when the attack was made:

TWO powerful warriors cast themselves together on Heyward, while another was occupied in securing the less active singing-master.

Neither of the captives, however, submitted without a desperate, though fruitless struggle: Even David hurled his assailant to the earth; nor was Heyward secured until

the victory over his companion enabled the Indians to direct their united forces to that object. He was then bound and fastened to the body of a sapling: : : :

When the young soldier regained his recollection, he had the painful certainty before his eyes that a common fate was intended for the whole party: On his right

was Cora in a durance similar to his own, pale and agitated, but with an eye whose steady look still read the proceedings of their enemies.

On his left the withes that bound her to a pine performed that office for Alice which her trembling limbs refused, and alone kept her lovely but fragile form from sinking to the ground. . . .

The vengeance of the Hurons had now taken a new direction, and they prepared to execute it with all that barbarous ingenuity with which they were familiarised by the practice of centuries.

Some sought knots to raise the blazing pile; one was riving the splinters of pine in order to pierce the flesh of their captives with the burning fragments; and others bent the tops of two saplings to the earth in order to suspend Heyward by the arms between the recoiling branches. But the vengeance of Magua sought a deeper and more malignant enjoyment.

While the less refined monsters of the band prepared before the eyes of those who were to suffer these well-known and vulgar means of torture, he approached Cora, and pointed out, with the most malignant expression of countenance, the speedy fate that awaited her.

"Ha!" he added, "what says the daughter of Munro? Her head is too good to find a pillow in the wigwam of 'le Renard'; will she like it better when it rolls about this hill a plaything for the wolves? Her bosom cannot nurse the children of a Huron, she will see it spit upon by Indians?"

"What means the monster?" demanded the astonished Heyward.

"Nothing," was the firm but mild reply. "He is a savage, a barbarous, ignorant savage, and knows not what he does. Let us find leisure, with our dying breath, to ask for him penitence and pardon."

"Pardon!" echoed the fierce Huron, mistaking in anger the meaning of her words. "The memory of an Indian is longer than the arm of the pale-faces; his mercy shorter than their justice. Say, shall I send the yellow-hair to her father, and will you follow Magua to the great lakes, to carry his water and feed him with corn?"

Cora beckoned him away with an emotion of disgust she could not control.

"Leave me," she said, with a solemnity that for a moment checked the barbarity of the Indian. "You mingle bitterness in my prayers, and stand between me and my God!" . . .

"Alice," she said, "the Huron offers us both life—nay, more than both; he offers to restore Duncan—our invaluable Duncan, as well as you to our friends—to our father, to our heart-stricken, childless father, if I will bow down this rebellious, stubborn pride of mine, and consent . . . to go to the habitations of the Hurons; to remain there; in short, to become his wife! . . . Will you, Alice, receive it at my hands, at such a price?" . . .

"No, no, no, better that we should die, as we have lived—together!"

"Then, die!" shouted Magua, hurling his tomahawk with a violence at the unresisting speaker, and gnashing his teeth, with a rage that could no longer be bridled, at this sudden exhibition of firmness in the one he believed the weakest of the party.

The axe cleaved the air in front of Heyward, and cutting some of the flowing ringlets of Alice, buried itself and quivered in the tree above her head. The sight maddened Duncan to desperation. Collecting all his energies in one effort, he snapped the twigs which bound him, and rushed upon another savage who was preparing, with loud yells, and a more deliberate aim, to repeat the blow. They encountered, grappled, and fell to the earth together.

The naked body of his antagonist afforded Heyward no means of holding his adversary, who glided from his grasp, and rose again with one knee on his chest, pressing him down with the weight of a giant.

Duncan already saw the knife gleaming in the air, when a whistling sound swept past him, and was rather accompanied, than followed, by the sharp crack of a rifle. He felt his breast relieved from the load it had endured; he saw the savage expression of his adversary's countenance change to a look of vacant wildness, and then the Indian fell prostrate and dead on the faded leaves by his side.

The Hurons stood aghast at this sudden visitation of death on one of their band. But, as they regarded the fatal accuracy of an aim which had dared to immolate an enemy at so much hazard to a friend, the name of "*la Longue Carabine*" (a celebrated Indian hunter and scout) burst simultaneously from every lip, and was succeeded by a wild and a sort of plaintive howl.

The cry was answered by a loud shout from a little thicket, where the incautious party had piled their arms; and, at the next moment, Hawk-eye, too eager to load the rifle he had regained, was seen advancing

upon them, brandishing the clubbed weapon, and cutting the air with wide and powerful sweeps.

Bold and rapid as was the progress of the scout, it was exceeded by that of a light and vigorous form which, bounding past him, leapt with incredible rapidity and daring into the very centre of the Hurons, where it stood whirling a tomahawk and flourishing a glittering knife, with fearful menaces, in front of Cora.

Quicker than the thoughts could follow these unexpected and audacious movements, an image, armed in the emblematic panoply of death, stole, with the imaginary glidings of a spectre, before their eyes, and assumed a threatening attitude at the other's side. The savage tormentors recoiled before these warlike intruders, and uttered as they appeared in such quick successions, the often-repeated and peculiar exclamation of surprise, followed by the well-known and dreaded appellations of:

"Le Cerf Agile! le Gros Serpent!"

But the wary and vigilant leader of the Hurons was not so easily disconcerted. Casting his keen eyes around the little plain, he comprehended the nature of the assault at a glance, and encouraging his followers by his voice, he unsheathed his long and dangerous knife, and rushed, with a loud whoop, upon the expecting Chingachgook:

It was the signal for a general combat. Neither party had fire-arms, and the contest was to be decided in the deadliest manner; hand to hand, with weapons of offence, and none of defence:

Uncas answered the whoop, and leaping on an enemy, with a single, well-directed blow of his tomahawk, cleft him to the brain. Heyward tore the weapon of Magua from the sapling, and rushed eagerly towards the fray:

As the combatants were now equal in number, each singled an opponent from the adverse band. The rush and blows passed with the fury of a whirlwind and the swiftness of lightning. Hawk-eye soon got another enemy within reach of his arm, and, with one sweep of his formidable weapon, he beat down the slight and in-artificial defences of his antagonist, crushing him to the earth with the weight of his blow:

Heyward ventured to hurl the tomahawk he had seized, too ardent to await the moment of closing. It struck the Indian he had selected on the forehead, and checked for an instant his onward rush:

Encouraged by this slight advantage, the impetuous young man continued his onset, and sprang upon his enemy with naked hands. A single instant was sufficient to assure him of the rashness of the measure, for he immediately found himself fully engaged with all his activity and courage in endeavouring to ward off the desperate thrusts made with the knife of the Huron:

Unable longer to foil an enemy so alert and vigilant, he threw his arms about him and succeeded in pinning the limbs of the other to his side with an iron grasp, but one that was far too exhausting to continue long. In this extremity he heard a voice near him shouting:

"Exterminate the varlets! no quarter to an accursed Mingo!"

At the next moment, the breech of Hawk-eye's rifle fell on the head of his adversary, whose muscles appeared to wither under the shock, as he sank from the arms of Duncan, flexible and motionless.

When Uncas had brained his first antagonist, he turned like a hungry lion to seek another. The fifth and only Huron disengaged at the first onset had paused a moment, and then, seeing that all around him were employed in the deadly strife, he had sought, with fiendish vengeance, to complete the baffled work of revenge:

Raising a shout of triumph, he had sprung towards the defenceless Cora, sending his keen axe as the dreadful precursor of his approach. The tomahawk grazed her shoulder, and cutting the withes which bound her to the tree, left the maiden at liberty to fly:

She eluded the grasp of the savage, and, reckless of her own safety, threw herself on the bosom of Alice, striving with convulsed and ill-directed fingers, to tear asunder the twigs which confined the person of her sister.

Any other than a monster would have relented at such an act of generous devotion to the best and purest affection; but the breast of the Huron was a stranger to any sympathy in the moments of his fury. Seizing Cora by the rich tresses which fell in glossy confusion about her form, he tore her from her frantic hold, and bowed her down with brutal violence to her knees:

The savage drew the flowing curls through his hand, and raising them on high with an outstretched arm, he passed the knife around the exquisitely moulded head of his victim, with a taunting and exulting laugh. But he purchased this moment of

fierce gratification with the loss of the fatal opportunity:

It was just then the sight caught the eye of Uncas. Bounding from his footsteps he appeared for an instant darting through the air, and descending in a ball he fell on the chest of his enemy, driving him for many yards from the spot, headlong and prostrate:

The violence of the exertion cast the young Mohican at his side. They arose together, fought and bled each in his turn. But the conflict was soon decided; the tomahawk of Heyward and the rifle of Hawk-eye descending on the skull of the Huron at the same moment that the knife of Uncas reached his heart:

The battle was now entirely terminated with the exception of the protracted struggle between "le Renard Subtil" and "le Gros Serpent." : : :

When they engaged, some little time was lost in eluding the quick and vigorous thrusts which had been aimed at their several lives. Suddenly darting on each other, they closed, and came to the earth, twisted together like twining serpents, in pliant and subtle folds:

At the moment when the victors found themselves unoccupied, the spot where these experienced and desperate combatants lay could only be distinguished by a cloud of dust and leaves, which moved from the centre of the little plain towards its boundary, as if raised by the passage of a whirlwind. : : :

Covered as they were with dust and blood, the swift and subtle evolutions of the combatants seemed to incorporate their bodies into one: : : :

The Mohican now found an opportunity to make a powerful thrust with his knife; Magua suddenly relinquished his grasp and fell backward without motion, and seemingly without life. His adversary leapt on his feet, making the arches of the forest ring with the sounds of his shout of triumph:

"Well done for the Delawares! victory to the Mohican!" cried Hawk-eye, once more elevating the butt of the long and fatal rifle. "A finishing blow from a man without a cross will never tell against his honour, nor rob him of his right to the scalp!"

But, at the very moment when the dangerous weapon was in the act of descending, the subtle Huron rolled swiftly from beneath the danger, over the edge of the precipice, and, falling on his feet, was seen leaping with a single bound into the centre of

a thicket of low bushes, which clung along its sides.

The Delawares, who had believed their enemy dead, uttered their exclamation of surprise, and were following with speed and clamour, like hounds in open view of the deer, when a shrill and peculiar cry from the scout instantly changed their purpose and recalled them to the summit of the hill:

"'Twas like himself!" cried the inveterate forester, whose prejudices contributed so largely to veil his natural sense of justice in all matters which concerned the Mingoes; "a lying and deceitful varlet as he is! An honest Delaware now, being fairly vanquished, would have lain still and been knocked on the head, but these knavish Maguas cling to life like so many cats-o'-the-mountain. Let him go—let him go; 'tis but one man, and he without either rifle or bow, many a long mile from his French comrades; and, like a rattler that has lost his fangs, he can do no further mischief until such time as he, and we, too, may leave the print of our moccasins over a long reach of sandy plain:

"See, Uncas," he added, in Delaware, "your father is slaying the scalps already! It may be well to go round and feel the vagabonds that are left, or we may have another of them loping through the woods, and screeching like any jay that has been winged!"

So saying, the honest but implacable scout made the circuit of the dead, into whose senseless bosoms he thrust his long knife with as much coolness as though they had been so many brute carcasses. He had, however, been anticipated by the elder Mohican, who had already torn the emblems of victory from the unresisting heads of the slain:

But Uncas, denying his habits, we had almost said his nature, flew with instinctive delicacy, accompanied by Heyward, to the assistance of the sisters, and quickly releasing Alice, placed her in the open arms of Cora: : : :

"We are saved! We are saved!" she murmured, "to return to the arms of our dear, dear father, and his heart will not be broken with grief! And you, too, Cora, my sister; my more than sister, my mother; you, too, are spared; and Duncan," she added, looking round upon the youth with a smile of ineffable purity and innocence, "even our own brave and noble Duncan has escaped without a hurt!"

Colonel Brooke's Quest.

By FOX RUSSELL.

In which the disappearance of a Viscount, a dangerous expedition in India, and, incidentally, a love affair, are concerned.

THE M.P.'S DESIRE.

GEORGE, 10th Viscount Chesney, was a lieutenant in the 121st Hussars, and as frank, boyish, and light-hearted a young fellow as ever wore His Majesty's uniform. Coming into the title and estates of Chesney at the age of ten, he had passed his boyhood at Chesney Abbey under the affectionate guardianship of his kinsman, Colonel Templeton:

Betty Templeton, the Colonel's only child, who was about a year older than George, had always been his playmate and friend, and before the young Viscount sailed with his regiment for India, it was generally understood that these two would be married on his return:

About a year before George Chesney joined the Service, his old friend and neighbour, Admiral Seaford, had introduced him to Colonel Edward Brooke, a man whose distinguished career and many hand-to-hand conflicts had won for him, in the Army, the sobriquet of "The War Horse."

Of women Brooke had seen little, and while he remained in the Service had no intention of marrying. Some day, he thought, he might be tempted into the thorny paths of matrimony—i.e., if he could meet the right woman; the right woman, according to his somewhat old-fashioned ideas, being of the "early Victorian" pattern—for Brooke, though still on the sunny side of forty-five, had old-world notions of women—notions vaguely connected with hysterics, tears, and the tambour-frame!

Just now, he was enjoying an unusual spell of idleness—if hunting and steeplechase-riding can be called idle pursuits. And in the interludes of these vigorous sports, he sometimes looked at Betty Templeton, and a thought struggled into his brain that if she were more of the type of woman he had always pictured to himself, and if she were not virtually engaged to young Lord Chesney, he—and at this stage his reflections usually ended—literally speaking—in smoke.

Mr. James Piggott-Chesney, M.P., cousin and next heir to George Chesney, was not *persona grata* at the Abbey. At thirty years of age he had attained the dignified position in Parliament of a recognised bore. Essentially a prig, he had always curried favour with anyone likely to be of any service to his political ambitions:

Sir Augustus Plessington, the Secretary of State for War, who had begun his acquaintance with Piggott-Chesney by shaking hands with him under the impression that it was someone else, had been sedulously cultivated. And the right honourable gentleman, having four plain and unmarried daughters, Mr. Piggott-Chesney, a rich man, was soon made welcome at his house:

The young M.P., for reasons connected with his own political career, paid great attention to the eldest and plainest Miss Plessington. That he had not the faintest intention of marrying her, concerned him little. For when this ambitious young man had quite decided upon the most advantageous time to enter into matrimony, he fully intended to marry Betty Templeton, taking it for granted that she would acquiesce in his views.

But, above all things, the young M.P. coveted the title and estates of his cousin George. As Viscount Chesney, he thought that the political ball would be at his feet, and through his friendship with the Secretary of State for War, place and power would be almost within his grasp. And the knowledge that George Chesney was unmarried, a soldier, and a steeplechase-rider, tended to encourage hopes in his ambitious breast:

When the Government determined on sending a punitive expedition to Afghanistan Mr. Piggott-Chesney rejoiced to think that yet another chance had come his way, and he exerted all his influence to get his cousin appointed thereto:

Just before the expedition started, Betty Templeton had received an urgent letter

from George, begging her to ask her father or his co-trustee to send him a thousand pounds out to India, for a purpose he was not at liberty to mention:

Colonel Templeton being too ill to attend to business matters, on account of a bad hunting accident, Betty had applied, but in vain, to the other trustee for the sum named: She determined that her cousin should have the money somehow; so she sold her hunters, and also parted with most of her jewellery, and in this way the money was ultimately raised and sent:

Shortly after this Mr. James Piggott-Chesney was able to congratulate himself when he heard that, mainly through his efforts, Lord Chesney was appointed to the "under-manned" expedition just starting with the object of visiting the Khan of Hilzapore, and attempting to bully him into some regard for Treaty rights:

* * *

THE NEW LORD.

MONTH after month rolled by, and still "The War Horse's" path lay through the smiling meadows of peace: The "Dogs of War" were held in leash:

"I'm getting slack!" he said one day laughingly, as he sat in Admiral Seaford's smoking-room; "if ever they want to use me again for active service, I shall have to go into training."

"Steeplechase-riding's no bad training for war, Ned: The man who can face the chances of *that* game won't be found amongst the shirkers when the guns begin to speak! Wonder how George Chesney's getting on," he added, "out in that Hilzapore Expedition? Near the district you commanded, isn't it?"

"Yes: Only a few miles away—a day's ride: I—I suppose, Betty—Miss Templeton—is to be Lady Chesney, one of these days, isn't she?"

"Yes, I hope so," replied the Admiral heartily.

Colonel Templeton regained his health very slowly: His great amusement was an occasional rubber of whist with Admiral Seaford, Brooke, and the Vicar: It was during one of these small card parties that a telegram arrived for the sick man: After excusing himself for opening it, he took a hurried glance at the words: Then the slip of paper fluttered out of his nerveless hands, as he dropped his head heavily upon them, with a groan:

"George—my boy—my boy's dead."

The Admiral stooped and picked up the message: He adjusted his glasses and read:

Deeply — regret — to — inform — you
— Lord — Chesney — dead — particulars
— follow — Ransom — Colonel.

Then he shoved the telegram across the table to Brooke, and turned aside to blow his nose violently, with a huge, coloured handkerchief: The Vicar, a kindly soul, murmured some of the commonplaces which rise to men's lips under such circumstances, but Colonel Templeton hardly heard them: Looking up, at length, he caught the eye of the Admiral—and the two old men grasped hands in silence across the table:

Brooke silently withdrew: He felt that these two life-long friends were better left to their grief alone; and so, by a judicious word, he induced the Vicar to accompany him out of the house:

It will readily be believed that the announcement of George Chesney's death had not overwhelmed Mr. Piggott-Chesney with grief—except when he had to refer to the "sad event" before other people: Then a tear was always ready to fill his sympathetic eye, and "my poor cousin, Lord Chesney," was never referred to without a becoming break in the speaker's voice:

But in private, it must be confessed that he bore his "great loss" with becoming fortitude—not to say thankfulness—that an all-wise Providence—somewhat assisted by himself and the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for War—had seen fit to remove the only obstacle which lay in his path to the title and Chesney Abbey:

Mr. Piggott-Chesney hastened to pay a visit of condolence (and business combined) to Colonel Templeton: And the sense of proprietorship, as he looked around the place, imparted an aspect of smug self-satisfaction to his face, which Betty thought perfectly odious.

When the usual greetings had passed between the two men, the M.P. remarked:

"Yes, very sad, my dear Colonel, very sad, all this. But grieving, alas! will not mend matters."

"No," said the old man, in hopeless tones, bending his head low to hide the tears, "no, you are right, of course."

"Now, my dear friend," the M.P. went on, "I want to consult your convenience in everything, and I wouldn't have you hurried for worlds! But, of course, George's sad death places upon my unwilling shoulders

a very great responsibility—I being now the owner of the title and estates—I being now—er—in fact, I being now Lord Chesney”—(cough)—“er—well, you see, I *ought* to be here.”

Colonel Templeton was not the man to require any second hint.

“You want us to leave the Abbey, then, at once?” he asked.

“No, no, my dear friend, you mistake me, you quite mistake me. The last thing I should desire is to hurry you in any way—most repugnant to my feelings to have to ask you to leave the Abbey at all, I assure you.”

The Colonel nodded. It would be hard to break with all his old surroundings, especially whilst grieving so acutely. He thought the new owner of the Abbey might have given him a little more grace than this.

“You *quite* understand my position in the matter, my dear Colonel?” went on the M.P.

“I quite understand, thank you: And on this day week the Abbey will be clear of us and our belongings. I shall take up my quarters at the old Dower House.”

“So good of you,” murmured the M.P., in purring tones, “and now, with your permission, I will have a chat with my young friend Betty.”

He rose, shook hands with the Colonel, and slowly, with a becoming expression of melancholy, faded out of the room. But on inquiring for his “young friend Betty” he was somewhat surprised, not to say disgusted, to find that that young lady had not waited to see him again, but had started out for a long ramble across the Downs.

“She might have known that I should desire to see her,” he said to himself. However, his disappointment was quickly swallowed up in the delightful sense of proprietorship which stole over his senses as he gazed at, first one treasure, then another, around him. They were all his—and he was “My Lord” and the head of the family.

He strolled about the park for a time, glorying in the thought that all was his own, and mentally noting the alterations and improvements (not always synonymous terms) which he would make—then he turned his steps in the direction of the private chapel, and entered.

As he gazed at the monuments to dead and gone Chesneys, an idea came into his mind:

“I will have a fine tablet erected to the memory of George Chesney: It will show

my grief in a befitting manner; it will also show my generosity towards the memory of one who—who rather stood in my way. I think the county people will be pleased. And showing such respect for his memory would also tend to disarm criticism, in case people should make idle remarks about his death having been indirectly occasioned through the unhappy accident of my having asked for his appointment on that expedition.”

* * *

UNPLEASANT CHANGES.

ALMOST as soon as the Templetons arrived at the Dower House, the new Lord Chesney was at the Abbey. The next day, Banks, the old steward, who had occupied that position for thirty years, attended him:

“Banks,” said Lord Chesney, “things have been greatly neglected here; you are all very much behind the times. I see you have no telephone across the park. How is that?”

Poor old Banks scratched his forehead. The telephone he had never clearly understood; and the idea of such an innovation at the Abbey had not crossed his mind.

“Well, you see, sir—my lord, I mean—you see we couldn’t have a wire run across the park—it might be damaging to the trees, and hurt the pheasants—they would be sure to fly against it, and it would look so queer—”

“So queer? Why queer?” snapped his new master. “And what do the trees matter? Many of them, I see, are ready for—er—conversion.”

“Conversion?” repeated the steward blankly.

“Yes—cutting down for timber—timber is money, my good man, though you don’t seem to think it here.”

“Cut them down, my lord!” cried the old man in horror. “What! the timber of the park?”

“I do not consider it ornamental, and that’s sufficient,” broke in the other curtly. “And I shall reduce the stud of horses to a pair.”

“Then you won’t be doin’ any huntin’, my lord?” asked Banks, with clouded brow.

“No. I shall have to be in constant attendance at the House of Lords—and that will leave me very little time.”

“Lord Furness is always huntin’ with these hounds—I thought perhaps—”

“Lord Furness, it is true, has a seat in

the Upper House," interrupted his master loftily, "but Lord Furness, though a very estimable man, is not—ah—a political entity, as I am."

Honest old John Banks scratched his head again. He didn't know what a "political entity" was.

"Ah, indeed, my lord, isn't he now?—ah, I wasn't aware o' that."

"And that makes all the difference," said Lord Chesney.

"Oh, of course, it would—certainly, my lord," rejoined the puzzled steward. And he determined to look up the word "entity" in the dictionary, as soon as he got back to his cottage.

"And now about the flowers and fruit and vegetables," interjected the new lord suddenly. "You must furnish me with a complete list of prices—"

"Prices, my lord!" cried the steward aghast, "why, the surplus has all been given away to friends of the family and to the tenants and the poor, ever since I came here—and I've been steward just on thirty years!"

"All that must be stopped at once—at once! I can be no party to wilful waste; see that not a cabbage leaves the estate unless it is accounted for."

"And the tenants, my lord? are they not to have their vegetables and—?" began the steward.

"Yes, at market prices—I must hold you responsible, my good Banks, for obtaining me fair prices."

The steward suppressed a groan. What were things coming to, he wondered?

"That ornamental water must be drained off," went on the fluent voice of the new peer. "Great waste of land, that. We could grow vegetables there admirably. And the animals—dogs, horses, pets of all kinds—these must be shot."

The steward looked dolorous.

"There's old Fan, the spaniel—she was Master George's favourite—you won't shoot her, my lord?"

"Oh, yes I shall—anything else?"

"Well, there's the twenty-year-old pony that Master George and Miss Betty used to ride when they were children."

"Must be killed, must be killed. Quite time, at twenty years of age."

"He don't cost much to keep, my lord. Rather than have him killed, I'd keep him myself, if—"

"Certainly, certainly, my good fellow—the only thing is that I'm not at all sure I

shall keep *you*! That must depend upon the way in which you carry out my orders. You'll soon see a change here!"

"Yes, my lord, I think I shall!" grimly replied the unfortunate servant, who had worked hard and honestly for thirty years, only to find himself now threatened with dismissal.

Despite the mural tablet now fixed in the Abbey Chapel, the former "Mr. James" was hardly popular. His dismissal of old servants, the way in which he was "starving" the estate, the selling of game, fruit, vegetables, and other things which had hitherto been freely given away; all these matters tended to make the neighbours and tenants look askance. Still, mammas with marriageable daughters felt themselves bound to overlook these drawbacks. For certainly Lord Chesney was the catch of the county.

The Viscount devoted himself for the present to Miss Plessington. She had always favoured his pretensions, even as a rich commoner; but now that he had so unexpectedly come into a title, her affection for him had visibly increased. His smugness of expression, his air of infinite satisfaction with his own utterances, slightly exasperated her, but then Miss Plessington had lived long enough to know that one cannot have everything one's own way:

* * *

BROOKE'S DANGEROUS TASK

MEANTIME, Brooke had been living a quiet, rural existence. This "idle life" as he called it, was making The War Horse "dream dreams." And in those dreams—dreams of a home, a haven from his wandering, fighting, life—Betty's face, and Betty's voice were ever present. For the war-worn soldier no longer disguised from himself that he loved Betty Templeton.

Just then, to Brooke's intense astonishment, the door was thrown open and the butler announced:

"Miss Templeton."

Brooke sprang to his feet:

"Colonel Brooke," said Betty, "I had to come to you, as father is too ill to do so: I don't know how to apologise for troubling you with our affairs, but you are the only man who can help me, and I know you will."

Brooke bowed his head in silent wonderment. Betty's direct way of speaking, the fact that she always came to the point, scorning to beat about the bush, had ever appealed irresistibly to his soldier-like mind.

"We—father, I mean—has just received a letter from India, from one of poor George's brother officers. The letter says that there is some talk—a rumour in the bazaars—that the Khan of Hilzalpore has a white prisoner! Can it, oh! can it be George?"

The girl clasped her hands together and turned her honest eyes on Colonel Brooke.

"Of course, father says the whole thing might be idle talk—nobody knows better than you, Colonel Brooke, what small value one can attach to stories told by the natives in the bazaars. But there might, there *might* be a chance, don't you think?" And the voice was so pleading and the eyes so filled with tears, that Brooke's heart was softened.

"I'm afraid to hold out the smallest hope to you, Miss Templeton," he replied. His heart bled for the girl thus robbed of her youthful lover. "I know these hill tribes well; they keep no prisoners—as a rule," he added quickly, trying to soften the truth as much as he could. He thought it would be only a cruel form of kindness to raise hopes, for he had lived amongst these Afghan tribesmen—and he knew their merciless nature only too well.

Betty's long lashes fell upon her cheek—the tears would come, hard as she strove to drive them back again:

"Then you think nothing—nothing can be done?"

Brooke did not answer. He was thinking hard.

"Could not an expedition go to rescue him—or, at least, to see if he were—still alive?" she asked despairingly.

"The first glimpse—even the first news—of an expedition, would be the death-warrant of any prisoner there!" he said. Then he added: "Forgive me for asking—I don't do so out of idle curiosity, as I'm sure you know, Miss Templeton: But I want you to tell me this: Were you—very fond of George Chesney? I have an object in asking."

Betty bent her head in an affirmative. Her heart was too full to speak just then.

Brooke also bowed his head. It was, then, as he had thought; her heart had been wholly given to George Chesney, and he himself was nothing to her. Nevertheless, he saw what he conceived to be a duty lying plainly before him—and he was determined that whatever happened it might always truthfully be said that "Ned Brooke played the game."

"There is one chance—a very remote one, Miss Templeton," he said, as he rose from his

seat. "I will go out to Hilzalpore—and do my best for you there."

"Oh, Colonel Brooke, what am I to say?" exclaimed Betty impulsively, but her eyes amply supplemented the baldness of her speech.

"I shall start on Friday by the mail, and catch the *Malabar* at Marseilles," said the ever-practical soldier. "And if—I mean *when*—I come back, you shall have some definite news of poor Chesney."

"But won't it be dangerous for you to go out to this horrible place? You'll have some soldiers with you, won't you?"

"That would be wholly useless, I'm afraid," he said:

"Surely you won't go alone? It would be terribly dangerous," she urged:

A grim smile flickered over Brooke's face: Danger disturbed neither his sleep nor his digestion: He had been at the game too long:

"The one chance of finding out George Chesney's fate is to go alone: I shall visit the Khan—and turn myself from a soldier into a detective: I know the district and I know the Khan: He cannot be trusted, but that does not matter: No, don't thank me, I'm only doing what any other man would do."

Long after Betty Templeton had left, on her homeward journey, Brooke sat with his head on his hand, staring into the fireplace: He had undertaken this strange task though he hardly entertained a hope that George Chesney was still living: But if he should find the man he sought, alive, it would be only to bring him back for the wrecking of all his own hopes—to marry Betty: He would do his best, and though he had made nothing of the peril, in the girl's presence, he knew well that he would be carrying his life in his hands.

Less than a month later, Colonel Brooke landed at Bombay, and began his adventurous journey: He traveled rapidly up country, and was fortunate enough to fall in with two of the officers who had served in the Expedition to Hilzalpore. From them he gathered all that was to be learnt of George's fate:

What Brooke heard served only to confirm his own previous impressions—that the young fellow had either been murderously done away with, or perhaps fallen a victim to some savage beast or venomous reptile in the forest. That he was still alive, he could not believe:

In brief, the story of Lord Chesney's

disappearance was—as nearly as Brooke could collate the facts—this:

The small expeditionary force to which he had been appointed, after a stay of some three weeks in Hilzalpore, was just about to start on its return journey. And on the eve of the day fixed, George Chesney vanished.

Brooke hunted up Colonel Ransome, who had been in command, and had a chat with him.

"I suppose young Chesney had done nothing to offend native prejudices, had he?" asked Brooke.

"Not that I know of," returned the Colonel. "I sent him one day, with a message to the Khan at his Summer residence, and when he returned he told me that the Khan had appeared to be in a great rage—for no reason, that Chesney knew. Of course, Chesney being fresh out from England and a trifle 'rocky' on his languages, may have inadvertently offended, but I shouldn't think so."

Colonel Brooke came away from the interview with a strong idea in his mind as to what the poor fellow's fate had been: "If he was not killed in the forest by some snake or wild beast, I feel pretty certain, knowing what I do of the Oriental character, that the boy said something—probably ignorant of its true meaning, which insulted the Khan. And the Khan marked him down, waited for his chance, and had him killed."

He paused, smoking hard whilst he thought:

"But I can't go back to England—to face that girl with her honest eyes—and tell her I made no effort to discover his fate. That he's dead long since, poor chap, seems pretty certain, and yet I must go."

He did not add that nothing was easier than for him to lose his own life in the hazardous venture. But he was thoroughly well aware of the fact, nevertheless. During the time he had spent in command of the frontier force, within thirty miles of this very place, the name of "Bruk Sahib," as he was called, was one to conjure with:

Better than any of his own *sowars* in the saddle, braver in action, more skilful in swordsmanship, "Bruk Sahib's" tall, lithe form had ever been in the thickest of the fighting. His extraordinary endurance, too, his utter fearlessness and cool disregard of odds, however great—all these had not failed to duly impress the Oriental imagination, and had caused the Khan of Hilzalpore to

form a sort of friendship with "Bruk Sahib."

Accompanied only by a couple of native servants, Brooke arrived at the gate of the Khan's city after a long and trying journey, and an hour later found him in the potentate's presence.

The Khan was curious to learn Brooke's motive for this strange visit. And Brooke, who knew his Khan, was equally keen on giving a—if not "the"—reason for his coming. He was anxious, so he said, to ascertain the value of Hilzalpore as a trade route to Adulibad.

"But you are not a trader, you are a soldier, Bruk Sahib," said the ruler suspiciously.

"True, yet the soldier goes first to prepare the way of the trader."

The Khan asked: "You have come quite alone here?"

Bruk Sahib laughed gently. Then he produced a revolver from his pocket and replied:

"No. I have brought a friend."

The Khan was silent for a minute, and then said:

"Your Government sent an Expedition to my country a short time ago, and demanded an indemnity of me for acts I could not control. They were unwise. They were wrong."

"They generally are," returned Brooke indifferently.

The potentate looked pleased. The Colonel Sahib agreed with him, then, in blaming the British *raj*.

"Since you were ruling here, Bruk Sahib, many things have happened. The hill-men have broken out, again and again, crossing the border and raiding. What could I do? Yet the British Government sent an expedition against me to try to provoke me to a fight. But I fought not. Why should I?"

"Why, indeed? Especially as, just or unjust as its cause may be, the British *raj* always triumphs."

A gleam of hatred crossed the ruler's face.

"They made me pay an indemnity—what is it but more grinding of taxes out of my people? And they got no fighting for their young warriors, as no doubt they expected and wished."

"They stayed some time here, I understood?" said Brooke cautiously. "Did you see much of the officers?"

A scowl passed over the Khan's face, and his fierce eyes blazed up as he replied:

"No—the dogs were——" And then he paused abruptly as he recollected whom he

was addressing: "Many of them knew not our language, and one son of a pig, bringing me a message from the Colonel Sahib, seated himself in my presence, thrusting the soles of his feet towards me! Am I a dog that I should be treated thus?"

And his voice quivered with anger as he spoke:

"That was wrong," rejoined Brooke gravely, "though probably it was done in ignorance: For know thou this, such an act is no insult to our rulers."

"I care not for that, Bruk Sahib! It was a dire insult to me—it was——" He hesitated.

"Perhaps," put in Brooke tentatively, "the fault was committed by some very young officer—there was one, I know, here: Him they call Chesney."

But all the Khan's craftiness came to his aid: He was not to be "drawn." He assumed an unintelligent look, and said carelessly:

"It may be—I know not the man's name; but he was ignorant of our language and talked even as a fool."

"The very young are ever foolish, oh Khan."

"Yes, but though so young——" He stopped abruptly: "Whether very young or not cannot matter to thee."

"Not at all," said Brooke indifferently: "I am not concerned for what happened to the Expedition: By the way, they had no fighting, and only lost one man, is it not so?"

"True: And had they sent you in command, they would not have lost even that beardless boy!"

"My memory is short: He was killed by a snake, was he not, in a forest near here?"

The crafty black eyes looked sharply up at him:

"He died," said the Khan evasively:

And Brooke, from that moment, made up his mind that poor George Chesney's life had been ended by the direct command of the man now leaning back on the silken cushions and regarding him with crafty, suspicious eyes. Whether he were right or not in this conjecture was a riddle which he intended, if possible, to solve for himself.

* * *

N PERILOUS FLIGHT.

IT was three days before Brooke obtained another interview with the Khan: Meantime, he was so closely watched whenever he left his apartments that it was impossible not to see that he was practically a prisoner:

At a second interview, the Khan became more friendly, and knowing Bruk Sahib to be a mighty hunter of big game, he invited him to come out to his forest residence to shoot.

"But I cannot ask you for two days yet: Certain things have to be prepared," he said rather hurriedly; "on the third day from this—then, not before, I shall expect you, Bruk Sahib: The track leads from the river side, about a mile from the city gates, right up to my hunting lodge, so you cannot miss the way: But I forget! You know the way!"

Brooke bowed his head in silence, as the Khan rose and quitted the presence chamber: Then he said to himself:

"Now, I wonder what those preparations are to be? And why am I not to be there this side of three days?"

From that time the vigilance of those watching him relaxed to a certain extent, probably in obedience to orders from the Khan: And on the following afternoon, rifle in hand, he rode out on the forest path which led to the hunting lodge:

He rode slowly on, his two servants, both mounted, following at a distance: Here and there clearings had been made in the underwood, and cultivated patches for the growing of maize and rice were to be seen, with oxen at work ploughing:

And in one of these patches, labouring with a hoe, his face almost unrecognisable from exposure to the burning Eastern sun, was a disheveled creature who momentarily ceased work to look up wearily and with lack-lustre eyes at Bruk Sahib, as he passed: Man of iron as he was, Brooke could only gasp out one word, in tones so hoarse that he hardly recognised them himself:

"Chesney!"

But the boy had flung away his hoe and was at the horse's side in a moment:

"Brooke! Oh, at last, at last!"

And before Brooke could put a hand beneath his arm, George Chesney had slipped limply to the ground, half-fainting.

Brooke, still hardly trusting the evidence of his own senses, so unprepared had he been for the sight of George Chesney in the flesh, was on his feet in a moment, raising the lad's head tenderly:

"Rouse yourself, Chesney, and don't faint if you can help it," he said:

"You won't let them keep me here? You'll be able to take me away with you?" Chesney said in agonised tones:

"I'm going to have a precious good try

for it!" muttered Brooke quickly, "and if I don't succeed, somebody's going to get hurt."

The four other miserable-looking slaves who had been working in the clearing with the young Viscount, had fled directly Bruk Sahib had looked up—so there was nothing to fear from them, except the possibility of their giving an alarm.

George Chesney soon revived, and then he began, in broken sentences, to explain: Brooke hardly heard him; he was thinking hard, planning in his busy brain what course to take which would give them the best chance of escape from the clutches of the Khan of Hilzalpore. For they were in a tight place, and Brooke knew it.

"That brute—the Khan—I offended him, it appears, when I took him a message from the chief—didn't sit down in the proper way or ought not to have sat down at all—some tommy-rot or other—I believe I turned the soles of my boots towards him—and he spat on the ground and got mad—however, he didn't do anything, except make an ass of himself—and it all passed off. But the day before we were to start back to India, I went out shooting—and suddenly my two *shikaris*—no doubt in the service of the old blackguard—suddenly seized me. Then half-a-dozen more niggers came out of the underwood and I was a prisoner. They took me before the Khan, who was in an awful gale—he raved and stormed—I didn't know what the dickens he meant even at the time—I only understood a few words, but I know he called me the son of a pig and spat in my face—pleasing Oriental observance this—and here I've been ever since, treated like a slave, and——"

"Come on," said Brooke, cutting short the narrative, "I've got a sort of plan—it's the best I can devise at the moment. I suppose you can ride, although your scarecrow clothing won't be very comfortable in the saddle. Get up on my servant's pony, the man is a native of this place, and will find his way back on foot. Now, come on. Can you use a rifle? Take mine, then."

George Chesney climbed painfully into the saddle. Once more on a good horse, and with a rifle in his hand, the boy shook off the horrible feeling of abject hopelessness in which he had lived for so many months, and braced up his shoulders and his nerves, at one and the same moment.

Turning short on his tracks, Brooke led the way back at a sharp canter. Of his plan for escape, he vouchsafed no word to

Chesney. At moments such as these, the man's whole nature seemed to undergo a change. Edward Brooke, the courteous, kindly gentleman, disappeared, and "The War Horse," iron in resolve, cool, resourceful, stern, and short of speech, appeared in his place.

Two miles from the river entrance of the forest path, an apparition, fifty yards ahead of him, scattered all Brooke's plans to the wind.

The Khan of Hilzalpore, accompanied by four armed and mounted retainers, was sitting on his horse, motionless as a statue. And the five horsemen were drawn up right across the jungle path.

Under closer espionage than he had imagined likely, Brooke's movements had been witnessed by the spies set over him, and his riding out, in the direction of the forest bungalow, duly reported to the Khan: Ever suspicious, like most of his race, the ruler of Hilzalpore had followed immediately. There was that along the jungle path which Bruk Sahib must by no means be allowed to see.

And as these two "leaders of men" met, the Oriental saw that the mischief was done. There was a grim challenge in each man's eye, he looked the other squarely in the face.

"What doest thou with the prisoner, Bruk Sahib?" thundered the Khan.

"Well might I ask that question of thee, O Khan," retorted Brooke.

"Dog, I will have thee torn to pieces by the camels!" cried the other, his face distorted with passion.

Brooke recognised that their lives were not worth five minutes' purchase. And in the next moment he had his adversary by the throat.

So suddenly had he spurred his horse and leapt at the Khan, that the latter was taken completely by surprise. Rising in his stirrups Bruk Sahib, towering over his foe, pressed the black throat ruthlessly back further and further, until, with a final effort, he hurled the ruler of Hilzalpore violently to the earth.

"Now ride for your life!" shouted Brooke, "to the river! It's the only chance left us!"

The four attendants had dismounted to succour their master, and Brooke and Chesney found no difficulty in riding through them: Away they went at full gallop.

The Khan, in a state of ungovernable fury, gasped out, as soon as he had recovered his breath:

"Pigs and sons of pigs! Follow them and return not till you have secured your prisoners! Go!"

Three immediately scrambled into their saddles and set off in hot pursuit. The fugitives had just begun to draw away slightly from their pursuers, when Chesney's pony suddenly blundered and fell heavily.

Chesney, though thrown off with some violence, was fortunately uninjured, and rose to his feet instantly. But the pony's neck had been broken by the fall.

So suddenly did Brooke pull up that the three pursuing *sowars* shot right past him, unable to stop their horses. Brooke's revolver flashed out, the foremost horse came crashing to the ground, and its rider, alighting on his head, lay stunned. Before the other two *sowars* could wheel their horses, Brooke had assisted Chesney on to the back of his own animal, and started off again, heading for a bend in the river, now about two hundred yards in front of them.

Attracted by the sound of firing, a small body of native cavalry, just emerging from the city gates, joined in the pursuit, and Brooke's experienced eye told him that their position was a desperate one.

As they reached the river bank, he looked in vain for a boat, as a hunted animal might look for covert. All the boats were higher up, and nearer the city—nearer the pursuing cavalry. Brooke's decision was taken in an instant: "We must chance it!" he said to Chesney. And, turning his horse, he urged him in the direction of the pursuing *sowars*.

The latter, quite unprepared for this move, reined up their ponies, and paused to await developments; then, as Bruk Sahib, riding furiously towards them, seemed as though about to charge, those in the front suddenly fell back on the rear rank, causing a momentary confusion. For Bruk Sahib's prowess was well known, and not even the fiercest Afghan warrior amongst them was desirous of being the first to bear his determined onslaught.

Suddenly Brooke pulled his horse up so short, that it had hard work to keep on its legs.

"Get off, Chesney. Follow me; quick! if you make a mistake, or a false step now, it'll mean your life!" he cried warningly.

Springing from the saddle, they rushed down the river-bank towards a flat-bottomed boat lying there. They slipped, slid, and ran over the yellow mud between them and the boat. And then the *sowars* on the bank, recovering their wits, and discerning for the

first time the fugitives' object, promptly dismounted and began firing at them.

Poor George Chesney, who had been bewildered at the extraordinary and rapid way in which events had crowded upon each other during the past half hour, struggled on, over the wet, slippery mud, clinging to his deliverer.

He was becoming exhausted—he blundered along still, but his pace grew slower and slower.

"Come on!" said Brooke inexorably, "you mustn't go any slower," and he dragged the young man along, regardless of his gasping protests that he could go no further.

Seeing the ill-success of their rifle practice, half-a-dozen of the cavalry mounted again, and, headed by a tall *subadar*, galloped along the bank, to cut off the boat at the sharp bend of the river. The rest continued to fire at the fugitives. Brooke pushed the boat to the edge of the mud, hurried Chesney over the bows, and then, as a bullet splashed into the water close beside him, shoved off into the swift-flowing stream.

He steered with the solitary paddle as far over to the other side of the river as he dared, without risking getting aground, or taking his eyes off the sharp bend which both the boat and the pursuing horsemen were now rapidly approaching, and called to Chesney to see that the rifle was ready for use.

"By Jove, Colonel, I don't know what you'll say to me, but—but I've dropped it somewhere!"

Bruk Sahib said nothing—but the lines deepened on his face.

The river narrowed at the bend, and four or five *sowars* plunged their horses boldly into the stream, as the boat spun round the corner. Brooke sat motionless in the bows, as the foremost horseman—the tall *subadar*, tulwar in hand, approached the boat.

Rising in his short stirrups, the big Afghan made a furious cut at Brooke, but the Colonel Sahib was as quick as his dark-skinned foe, and caught the stroke upon the blade of the paddle.

Again, with appeals to Allah, curiously intermingled with revilings on all the "sons of pigs," the *subadar* raised his terrible weapon. But this time Brooke, using the paddle with lightning rapidity, caught the fellow full in the throat, and, with a vigorous shove, literally pushed him right over his horse's tail into the water.

Another of the troopers waded out on foot, and grabbed the side of the boat, but when

he found himself looking straight up the barrel of a Colt's revolver with Bruk Sahib's face at the back of it, he promptly let go his hold and made for *terra firma* again.

A few more shots were fired from the bank, and the *sowars* followed the boat for a mile or so downstream; then, as the river divided into three forks, and Brooke steered his little craft down the one furthest from his pursuers, and which he knew would lead him to the nearest British outpost, the pursuit ceased, and the fugitives were, comparatively speaking, free from danger.

Worn out with his exertions, and the terrible excitement of the pursuit, George Chesney soon dropped off to sleep; and Bruk Sahib, as the stars came out, one by one, on the perfect Indian night, sat with his paddle across his knees to give a stroke here and there, just keeping the boat's head straight, whilst the fast-flowing current carried them downstream. From time to time he gave a kindly look behind him at the sleeping man. Then he filled his pipe, and murmured beneath his breath:

"I've saved him for Betty. It's a queer world. I've done this to 'resurrect' the only man who stands between me and the woman I love."

* * *

THE VISCOUNT'S REBUFF.

SIR AUGUSTUS PLESSINGTON, together with his wife and elder daughter, were staying for the week-end at Chesney Abbey. The Viscount was enabled to entertain his guests cheaply, by driving them over in his motor-car to a meet of the Haybury Foxhounds.

The journey was accomplished without mishap of any sort, and on pulling up with a snort, at the cross-roads, where hounds met, almost the first figure to catch the new lord's eye was that of Betty Templeton:

Having sold all her horses, Betty was rarely seen now in the hunting field. But to-day she was out, Admiral Seaford having given her a mount.

In her neat habit, the graceful lines of her figure appeared to the Viscount more beautiful than they had ever done before. And from her, his glances were transferred to the lady at his side—Aurelia Plessington, with her somewhat puny frame and unhealthy complexion. Yes, there could be no doubt which of these two would be his choice when the time came.

Lord Chesney's motor-car moved alongside

the lower end of the covert, where it came to a standstill. Sir Augustus, his wife and daughter, then alighted and joined the people on an adjacent hill, from which they could view the day's proceedings.

Betty's mount, very fresh, and fretting at the delay in drawing, fidgeted about so much that the girl determined to take him well away from the rest of the field.

Unluckily, as the horse, flinging his head about, galloped up the miry ride, he blundered into a hole and came down heavily, hurling the girl some distance out of the saddle. On rising to her feet, Betty found that her shoulder was slightly hurt, but not enough to stop her from hunting. She caught the reins before the horse could get away—and then, to her intense chagrin, found that the chestnut was dead lame.

She led him slowly back again down the ride, and, at the top end, met the Admiral mounted on his sturdy black.

"Hullo, there, what's the horse been doing to you, Betty?" he called.

"Oh, Admiral, I'm so sorry, he galloped into a hole and fell. And the awful part about it is that he's lame—very lame."

"Serve him right, for being such a fool!" grunted the mariner. "Hope he hasn't hurt you, my dear?" with a ring of anxiety about the gruff tones.

"Not a bit, thank you, Admiral. Only a little stiffness in one shoulder. Is Mrs. Trevor here still? If so, I'll get her to drive me home."

"Oh, the horse will be all right—my groom is somewhere about. He can take this beggar. But Mrs. Trevor didn't come any further than the meet, so you must find somebody else to—Great Jehosaphat! Who's making that beastly row?" As a blast of a motor-hooter just below them made Admiral Seaford's horse jump at least a yard.

"Foo-Foo-Foo-ool!" went the hooter, as Lord Chesney tried to back his clumsy-looking machine down the lane, where, of course, there was no possible room to turn. Then, as, masked and goggled, he suddenly came into view, the old sailor gasped out:

"What the dickens is it? Oh, I see. Hi!" he shouted aloud (most disrespectfully, thought the Lord of Chesney), "Hi! here's Miss Templeton wants a lift home. Cut along up the lane and tell my idiot—he's on a big grey—to take this lame horse. Then Miss Templeton can get into that stink-car of yours, and go home."

Admiral Seaford certainly did not believe

in beating about the bush when speaking to even so alarmingly important a personage as the Viscount.

"Delighted," murmured Lord Chesney. "But I fear I shall have to wait for my party. I have the Secretary of State for War staying with me, and brought him out to see the meet. The Secretary of Sta——"

"Old swab with the ginger whiskers?" interrupted the Admiral brusquely. "He's over the hill there, with his wife and a thin, pale-faced girl, who I suppose is his daughter."

"Miss Plessington is——" began the Viscount with dignity, when Admiral Seaford again cut him short with:

"I'll go over and tell him you'll be back in half-an-hour or so, to fetch them. Meantime, you cut along home with Miss Templeton."

"But—er—you don't know Sir Augustus."

"No. But I jolly soon will. Come up, old hairy heels!" he concluded, addressing the heavy black horse which carried him. And the next moment, as the Admiral rode off, Betty and Lord Chesney found themselves alone.

"My dear Betty," commenced the Viscount, bending down over the fair young head and letting the machine swerve sharply to the right, "my dear girl, I have been wishing for some time—past—hullo! I wonder if there's room to pass that waggon? I must blow the——"

"Foo-foo-ool!" bellowed the hooter, and they shot past the lumbering vehicle.

"My dear Betty," resumed the newly-made peer, "for a long time I have wished for the opportunity of addressing you on a subject so important, that it is with the greatest satisfaction I at length find myself in a position which enables me to—confound that dog!" narrowly missing a stray cur which rushed out of a barn, barking furiously at them.

Having straightened the car again, after his sharp swerve out to avoid the dog, he resumed:

"You may have thought it strange on my part that I have never yet encouraged any woman to think that I regarded her with anything more than ordinary friendship."

Betty confessed that she really hadn't thought of the subject at all.

"Ah, my dear girl, you are young yet, and the things which—ah—which—ah—which are really of the greatest importance to your welfare, and especially your welfare in the near future, pass by you 'like sheep

that pass in the night'"—he meant "ships that pass in the night," but the Viscount, when excited, was invariably unsound in his quotations.

Betty, without gleaning the faintest indication of what was coming, felt both bored and hungry, so she ignored the oratory, and asked what time it was, and how soon they were likely to reach home.

The Viscount was a little disconcerted, but without pause, continued:

"Betty—er, the time is twelve thirty-five, and we are not very far from home, now—Betty," he repeated, "I am not one who lightly thinks upon so serious, so solemn a subject as matrimony; I have given the subject my most earnest thought——"

"Look out for that donkey standing in the road!" interrupted Betty sharply.

A "Foo-foo-foo-ool!" of the horn, and a quick turn of the wheel saved the ass from immolation, and once more the Viscount took up the very broken thread of his narrative.

"Yes, Betty, as you know, I am a man of strong character, I never do things in a hurry. But having given my fullest attention to the matter, I have at length concluded that it is a duty to my position to take a wife. And you are the woman I have chosen, for I feel, I know, that you will adorn—yes, I say it advisedly—you will adorn the position."

The girl turned in her seat for a moment to stare at him and assure herself that he was not playing some huge joke.

"Yes, but, James, I don't want to adorn the position," she said.

Lord Chesney blinked his eyes at her in blank astonishment. Could he have heard aright? Not want to adorn the position? Not want to be his wife? Oh, the idea was preposterous! In condescending tones, he said:

"My dear girl, I fear I have been too sudden, too abrupt, with you. You can hardly have grasped the meaning of what I have said. I—offer—to make—you—my—wife—my wife!" he repeated.

"Thanks, James," replied the girl calmly, "it's very flattering—and all that—but I couldn't marry you—you see, I don't love you, and——"

"Love will come," he muttered, with a frown.

"Oh, no, really it won't. Please take this as my final answer. I'm sorry to distress you, but it must be 'No' and always 'No.'"

The Viscount was furious at Betty Templeton's refusal of him, and immediately he had left the girl at the Dower House he returned to pick up the Plessingtons, flying along the road at a wholly unwonted pace, and collecting in his wild career a fox terrier, two chickens, and a child's hoop.

"My dear Lady Plessington, pray forgive my apparent rudeness in driving off without you all; Miss Templeton, who formerly resided at the Abbey, got a fall from her horse, and I had to take her home in the motor. Then I came back for you, as fast as I could."

He got them aboard the motor, and then proceeded to make himself agreeable. Aurelia Plessington appreciated him, he told himself, even if Betty Templeton did not. And Miss Plessington on that occasion certainly did her best to captivate the dejected—and rejected—Viscount. To be mistress of Chesney Abbey would suit Aurelia well.

Lord Chesney, smarting under his wholly unexpected defeat, was more malleable than usual, and under the reviving influence of Most '89 at dinner that Saturday night, he became again appreciative of Aurelia Plessington's bright glances. By the time they had finished their second rubber of bridge, Lord Chesney thought he could best soothe his wounded feelings, serve his political interests, and secure his revenge upon the girl who had flouted him, by graciously condescending to marry Miss Plessington.

* * *

AFTER MANY DAYS.

THE following day, time hung rather heavily. A walk after morning church, and a stroll through the glass houses in the afternoon pretty well summed up the list of amusements Lord Chesney had to offer his guests. But he did not fail to "improve the shining hour" with Aurelia Plessington.

The Rector always held evening service at the Parish Church and the private chapel at Chesney Abbey, on alternate Sundays. And on this particular day, it was the turn of the Abbey to be favoured. The Viscount and his guests occupied the great, square, family pew in which generations of Chesneys had worshiped.

A quaint building this chapel, the walls thickly studded with carved stones recording the passing of dead and gone Lords of Chesney, whilst, at the foot of the chancel steps, the stone effigy of a recumbent figure

lay, clasping a huge, two-handed sword. The figure was that of a man in armour, Sir Hugo de Chesneye, a doughty warrior, who fought stoutly for king and country. And beside him lay the figure of Dame Alys, his wife, with hands piously crossed upon her breast.

The handful of villagers living around the ancient Abbey had straggled into the evening service, trooped out again, and slowly dispersed. The Viscount showed his guests round the chapel, not forgetting to point out the tablet erected to the memory of his predecessor. Then he escorted them back to the house. Half-an-hour later, he remembered that he had left his keys in the locker of the big pew, and strolled down to the chapel, now deserted and dark, but for the rays of a brilliant moon, unlocked the door, and walked over to the place where he imagined the keys to be.

For some minutes, however, in the obscurity, he could not find them. And when, at length, he had done so and placed them in his pocket, he looked up at the wall in front of him, where a bright patch of moonlight shone, curiously enough, as it seemed to him, full on the mural tablet of his own putting up. And once again he read, half-aloud, half to himself, the words:

Sacred to the memory of George Yorke Brandon, tenth Viscount Chesney.

He paused, as a slight noise at the foot of the chancel steps where lay those cold, white effigies of stone, broke upon his ear. Without turning his head, he became aware instinctively that he was no longer alone in the chapel.

No cloud obscured the pale light of the moon: it still shed its refulgence on the fateful words announcing George Chesney's death; then, as the new owner of the Abbey slowly turned in the direction whence sounds had proceeded, his eye fell upon, first the recumbent effigy of the dead Sir Hugo; and then, standing right in the shaft of moonlight beyond, the figure of the man whose fate he had pretended to mourn—to whose memory he had—with his tongue in his cheek—erected this marble scroll: George, tenth Viscount Chesney, stood before him in the flesh!

George Chesney's unexpected and startling appearance in the chapel that Sunday night, and, in fact, his arrival in England unannounced, was due to accident and not design:

In their flight from the Khan of Hilzalpore,

so hot and determined was the pursuit, that the fugitives had been forced to avoid the ordinary route back to Bombay, which place they desired most to reach, and through "many and great dangers" they made their way down the Indus, sailing thence to their destination:

But Fate, which had thus far smiled on their efforts, now suddenly turned her back on the way-worn travelers. Storms gravely imperiled them; their ship proved unseaworthy, and after a three days' hurricane, became helpless. The vessel which came to their aid proved to be a homeward-bound sailing ship, and this fact prevented any communication being made of their whereabouts, either to India or England.

Directly the two storm-tossed travelers arrived in this country, they hurried ashore to put the telegraph in motion, but found that no message could be delivered at Chesney on a Sunday—which day it happened to be. Hence the appearance of the Viscount there, unannounced. He had been driven from the railway station nearest the Abbey, and was already half-way through the park, when an overpowering wish to be alone with the beauties of his old home, now lit up so gloriously by the light of the moon, induced him to discharge the fly and walk.

Arrived at the chapel, he had seen the door standing open, and actuated by a desire—which he was half-ashamed to acknowledge even to himself—to go in, fall on his knees, and in those sacred precincts, give heartfelt thanks for his deliverance and safe return, he entered: And there, before him, full in the moonlight, he was staggered at seeing James Chesney in the act of reading those fateful words:

Sacred to the memory of —

Of himself!—who now, astonished and dumfounded, realised for the first time, that his own kith and kin had thought him dead!

So great had been the shock of finding his cousin alive, that James Piggott-Chesney came nearer to fainting than he had ever been in his life before: His mouth had become suddenly dry, and his lips felt like parchment.

"You—George," he at length found voice enough to gasp, "and alive—after all this time?"

"Yes, after all this time: I only landed in England this morning, and came straight on here: I tried to send a telegram, but found that was impossible. So I was

obliged to come on unannounced: You look as if you had seen a ghost—your face is ghastly——"

"I—I—your appearance—it was so sudden—so unexpected: We all thought—we thought you——"

"Dead," said George. "Yes, so I see." And he pointed to the stone tablet. "It isn't every man who has the chance of reading his own epitaph! Cheer up, James, I've had a rough time, but I'm all right."

James Piggott-Chesney had never felt less inclined to "cheer up" in his life. His peerage a myth, his rent-roll vanished—no longer owner of the Abbey, no longer the "catch of the county." He had been rejected by Betty—would even Miss Plessington now accept him? He would be turned out of the Abbey—just as he had turned out Colonel Templeton and his daughter: As he had done to others, so should it be done unto him:

In silence the two men entered the Abbey: And then came an awkward moment when the "host" had to introduce his unexpected guest to the Plessingtons. For host and guest had now, with startling suddenness, changed places:

Aurelia clasped her hands and fixed her small eyes on Lord Chesney's face, in intense interest:

"And were they cannibals—the people who took you prisoner?" she asked: Aurelia's notions of geography and savage races were always of a hazy description:

"Not quite as bad as that, Miss Plessington," laughed George: Then, longing to get away and change his much-worn, dirty garments, he said:

"I hope you'll excuse me if I go up to my room and change into decent clothes now: These have been through 'battle, murder, and sudden death' with a vengeance. But first I'd like to see the old Colonel and Betty: Where are they?"

The last remark was addressed to Mr. Piggott-Chesney, who sat staring up at the ceiling, as though lost in thought:

"They—they've moved into the Dower House—but you—you can see them tomorrow: I will send a groom over and tell them the joyful"—the word "joyful" stuck hard in his throat, but he forced himself to give it utterance—"the joyful news of your escape, at once: You see, believing you were dead—we—er—that is, the Templetons—very properly saw that they could not remain any longer at the Abbey, and so they—they left, and I—I came in."

"But why?" asked George, in all innocence. The whole situation was still strange to him.

"Because I had succeeded—or rather *thought* I had succeeded—to the title."

The groom was duly dispatched, and George went up to his old room to change his dress.

Next morning, he rushed off to see his old guardian, and the meeting between them was a most affecting one. Betty was present, and though George kissed her and she kissed him, there seemed a certain constraint in their meeting, which the girl was quite at a loss to explain, even to herself.

"And Colonel Brooke—is he back? How splendidly he has behaved!" exclaimed Betty, her honest eyes afire with excitement at George's graphic recital of their joint adventures.

"Splendidly!" echoed the young man: "I should think he just is splendid! By Jove! you should have seen how he outwitted the *sowars* by his 'cuteness one minute, and knocked the *subadar* off his horse the next! No wonder 'Bruk Sahib' is looked on as a holy terror out there!"

Betty's face was suffused with a scarlet flush. Brooke had done all this, and he had done it for her:

* * *

BETTY'S DILEMMA.

FEW except the Templetons, and Admiral Seaford, were aware that Brooke's absence in India had witnessed any more exciting scenes than those which fall to the lot of the ordinary traveler. But Betty let very few hours pass from the time of his arrival, before going over to thank him for all he had done. He had carried his life in his hands: he had run all risks—for the sake of a friend, truly; but not an old, not a very dear one. Why had he made this quiet, unassuming, but none the less splendid sacrifice?

And her woman's heart could not fail to reveal to her something, at all events, of the true answer. He must have cared—at least in some degree—for her: Yet the feeling could hardly have been love.

She had revealed to him that there was an "understanding"—which morally bound her—between George Chesney and herself—that, if he, Brooke, succeeded in his quest, it would only be to bring back the very man who must ever stand between her and himself. And Betty could hardly bring herself to believe that this man of iron, even

if he liked and admired, could really love her. Love and "The War Horse" had always seemed so far apart.

Betty had, for not altogether unnatural reasons, rather dreaded the interview with him—but as she crossed the threshold of his room, the feeling vanished:

"Oh, Colonel Brooke!" she began impulsively, "how can I ever thank you for what you have done?"

"Don't thank me at all, Miss Templeton," he responded quickly. "'All's well that ends well,' and we need not think of it any more."

"You wish to cheat me of the poor little show of gratitude I can make—it was the noblest, the most self-sacrificing of acts. And my father told me plainly that your very life hung in the balance, all the time you were in that horrible place."

The dewdrops were glistening in the beautiful eyes, and Brooke, outwardly so calm and cold, felt a maddening desire to take her in his arms and cover her face with kisses. For even veterans of forty-five are human—some of them very human. They had been standing hand-in-hand: Now he dropped her fingers and invited her to sit.

A sudden constraint seemed to have come between them: Brooke glanced at his muddy, be-spurred riding boots, whilst Betty began to draw patterns on the carpet with her walking stick. "The War Horse" was the first to break the silence.

"You—you will be married very shortly now, I suppose, Miss Templeton? Lord Chesney will soon have to rejoin his regiment. Are you going out to India with him?" he said, in tones which he strove hard to make sound ministerial.

"No," answered the girl slowly, "I—we have arranged nothing; it is—oh, no, George will go back to his regiment at once, and—we are not going to be married for a long—at least, for some time to come."

The conversation still halted painfully. Betty would have got up to go, but for the feeling that she must more adequately thank this man who had done so much for her, and received—nothing.

"Colonel Brooke, is there anything we can do to show you how grateful——" But he gently interrupted her:

"Nothing could be a greater reward than your thanks, my dear Miss Templeton. Believe me, I much—appreciate them."

The words were commonplace, but despite his efforts to appear calm, there was a slight tremor in his voice.

Betty raised her eyes to his, as she caught the tell-tale inflection in his voice. Did he—could it be—that he loved her?

The thought sent a hot flush, crimsoning her throat and face, up to the roots of her hair. And then what had hitherto been doubt and hesitation as to her own feelings, became clear as crystal. The scales suddenly fell from her eyes and she knew, in a moment of time, that she loved—loved, not George Chesney, but the man who had, at the peril of his life, brought George Chesney home—for her.

And immediately in the train of this thought came another, less pleasant: Brooke had never spoken a word to her of love. Was the love, then, all on her side? And even were it otherwise—even if she *knew* he loved her, was she not bound by every code of honour to carry out that carelessly given promise to marry George?

For her, the rest of that interview was a blank—she spoke a few meaningless sentences, and spoke them mechanically. What he answered—or whether he ever answered at all—the girl never rightly knew. But until she entered her own room at the Dower House, and a passionate flood of tears relieved her heart, she thought that she must surely be the most unhappy girl in all the world.

* * *

ASTONISHING NEWS.

HEARTILY as George Chesney threw himself into the work which lay before him, that of restoring things to their former state—his time in England being limited, as he was under orders to rejoin his regiment—there was one thing which he always seemed to flinch from—any *tête-à-tête* with Betty Templeton:

Betty wondered more and more at his obvious nervousness in her presence, his unwillingness to be left alone with her. But though she wondered at it, it was an unspeakable relief to her. Struggling as she was against the terrible feeling that her love had been transferred from George Chesney—if he could ever be said to have possessed it—to his friend, she naturally shrank from the inevitable moment when George should speak of the coming marriage.

But at last, George Chesney felt that the interview he so much feared could no longer be postponed. He had to tell Betty something—something which was to alter the whole tenor of their lives and probably lose him the girl's friendship for ever—and having

"screwed his courage to the sticking point," he seized an opportunity, when Betty was sitting alone in the library of the Dower House, to make his disclosure.

"Betty," he began hurriedly, "if you knew what I—what I wanted to tell you—"

The girl started nervously, and, interrupting him, exclaimed:

"George, dear, is it—is it anything about—about—marriage?"

"Yes—it's about marriage," he said huskily.

"Couldn't it be postponed, dear? I mean you—you don't want to marry yet, and—"

"No: I don't want to marry, but still, there's something to tell you that must be told. I never knew that I was such a coward—I never thought I could be such a blackguard as I am! Oh, Betty, what—what will you say to me, what will you think of me, when I tell you—"

"George, dear," interrupted the girl in earnest tones, "why need you tell me anything?—now—I don't want to hear," she concluded rather weakly.

"Betty, I must explain about—about why I wanted that money, which you, like the dear, good friend you are, sold your horses and jewels to send me: I did a blackguardly thing—to you—and—and I had to have money—but I never dreamt you would raise it for me in the way you did. Oh, dear, dear Betty! we have always been such friends, we've loved each other, haven't we?—as—as children—though I know that only makes my conduct the worse! But try, do try to forgive me! I am married!"

"Married!" gasped Betty, in blank astonishment.

"Married," repeated the young Viscount, dropping his eyes. And when he raised them again, the next moment, Betty had crossed the room and stood before his chair. He sprang to his feet and the girl flung herself into his arms.

"Oh, George, George! I am so thankful!" were the wholly unexpected words which fell upon his ear.

George Chesney could not believe the evidence of his senses. He quietly withdrew his arms from his old playfellow, put his hands on her shoulders, and looked her squarely in the face.

"You are 'so thankful,' Betty? Thankful, I suppose, that you're not going to marry me, eh? Well you're not very flattering, I must say!"

And once more the boyish face broke out into smiles.

"Well, dear, you've taken a big weight off my mind. I know, all the same, that in falling in love with another girl, I behaved like——"

But Betty's hand was over his mouth and stopped his further utterance.

"Never mind that, George. Tell me all about her."

Betty's face beamed with joy, and her voice could scarcely conceal the exultation in it. She was free. The performance of that foolish half-promise, half-engagement to her cousin, was not to be exacted of her. The feeling she had always had for him she now knew was not love; it was friendship, pure and simple.

George Cheaney, his mind lightened of an almost insupportable load—freely launched out into a description of his girl wife, and nowhere could he have found a more sympathetic listener than Betty.

"Well, it was on the ship going out," he rattled on, "and she—I mean Agnes de Ravignac—a French girl—she was awfully nice to me. She is the daughter of the Prince de Lussan—awfully aristocratic-looking old boy, all aquiline nose and white moustache, you know—and I was awfully miserable at losing you, Betty, and she was so sympathetic with a fellow down on his luck—old boy with the beak didn't like her talking to me, at first, but he happened to be a great friend of our Colonel—known each other all their lives, and so forth—and through him we all got to be awfully friendly, and—and Agnes is so pretty:

"And as we married secretly almost as soon as we landed in India, and I didn't dare to say anything about it, and Agnes was in an awful fright of her father—rather terrible old person—I had to have a thousand pounds more than I'd got in hand, just before that expedition started for Hilzapore, to pay for things that I'd bought for my wife—sounds awfully funny talking about a fellow's wife, doesn't it, Betty? So I had to ask you to do the business for me with the trustees.

"By Jove, won't it be splendid when I bring her home and she and you will be pals just like you and I have always been: You'll just love her, Betty, right away, directly you see her—she's so sweet. At least, of course I don't mean that she's sweeter than you, you know, but I mean that you're not so sweet as Agnes—Oh, confound it! what a mess and muddle I'm making of everything! I don't know

whether I am standing on my head or my heels! And now, come along, and let's tell the old Colonel. It is good of you to take it as you have done, Betty: You always were a brick!" he concluded. "And it makes me feel just like a big schoolboy again, with a half-holiday thrown at his head!"

Then, a little more soberly, he added:

"You're sure—quite sure—you didn't want to—to marry me?"

Betty sighed contentedly—she might never marry the man she loved, but at least she was now free from any obligation to marry the one she did not.

"I'll try to bear up against the loss!" she answered demurely, the mischief dancing in her eyes.

* * *

THE ACCIDENT.

TWO days later, Betty and George were jogging along to Barn Hill, the meet of the Haybury Foxhounds. George was pouring into Betty's sympathetic ear a list of his young wife's perfections and charms.

"She'll be waiting for me when my ship arrives at Bombay. Isn't it a splendid thing to think of, that a girl should love you? It's almost too good to be true!" he exclaimed, his handsome face flushing with joy. "As to her father—it'll raise the hair off his head when he hears Agnes and I are secretly married. She writes me that she has never dared to tell him—not even when she was weeping her eyes out, thinking she was a widow! The Prince is a terrible old Turk—awfully rich—and he has sworn that Agnes should marry one of the old nobles of France or that she shall never marry at all! This'll be my last day's hunting, Betty. I'm off to the 'Shiny' next Friday, you know: I said good-bye to dear old Brooke yesterday, in case he shouldn't be out with hounds to-day. He is a rare good sort—never did man have two better, braver friends than Brooke and Betty—by Jove, they ought to be one firm!"

And Betty quickly stooped down to adjust her stirrup—not, of course, to hide the tell-tale flush which overspread her beautiful face.

"Yes, and when I told Brooke that I was secretly married, he seemed as if the news had, somehow or other, fairly knocked the stuffing out of him, at first. He looked for a moment or two as if he'd seen a ghost. Then he said in a dull, leaden sort of way:

'I congratulate you—you have chosen the best, the most lovable woman in the world,' and then turned and stared out of the window.

"Well, when he said that, it was my turn to stare a bit!

"How do you know?' I asked. 'How do you know anything about my wife? Did you ever meet Agnes in India?'

"Agnes!' he almost yelled. 'What do you mean?'

"Mean,' I said. 'I mean that to the best of my belief you've never even set eyes on my wife, and yet you say—' But he seemed to suddenly wake up from a dream, then. He rushed up and shook hands, and said: 'My dear Chesney, you have my very heartiest congratulations. What a fool—I mean, what a horrible mistake! Oh, never mind what I am saying! I'm only so rejoiced to find that she is not married—I mean that you are married—that I—' And then he stopped.

"But I told you that before,' I began, and then he cut in again:

"Yes, of course—I know—I'm so pleased that I—I can't express myself clearly—you see the idea—didn't seem to—to quite strike me in the right light, when you first announced it. Here, take a cigar—have two—'

"And smoke 'em both at once?' I grinned. I never saw the old 'War Horse' so agitated before. Why, when he tackled the Khan in the forest and half throttled him, and again when he killed the *sowar*, he was as cool as a cucumber. But yesterday—just at the announcement of my marriage—he seemed to go quite off his head. And he wound up the proceedings by shoving a cigar into the blazing fire, and sticking the lighted end into his mouth!"

All of which had puzzled simple-minded George Chesney as much as it amused his companion. The key to the mystery of Brooke's erratic conduct was carried by Betty only.

And the subject of this conversation, himself, was the first figure they discerned at the meet.

Two days before, he had told George it was doubtful whether he should come to Barn Hill. But "circumstances alter cases," and—

It was a glorious morning, and the wintry sun shone out brilliantly. Hounds were no sooner thrown into a large patch of gorse than a quick note, followed almost immediately by a chorus from the main body of

the pack, told plainly of a fox's whereabouts. The quarry quickly broke covert, and with a defiant whisk of his white-tagged brush, set off at top speed.

Hounds followed in hot pursuit: the pace was good, and well in the front rank were Betty, Brooke, and a few others; and everything went well until they reached a locked gate.

Brooke, catching his mount short by the head, sent him at it. But the horse was beaten; he changed his leg in the act of galloping at it, and the next moment a crashing of timber, as the stiff top bar cracked, but refused to break, announced a disaster; Brooke was down, on the far side of the gate, with his horse on top of him.

The chase was at once abandoned, willing helpers quickly slipped off their horses, and ran to the injured man. Some held the horse, now kicking furiously and horribly close to Brooke's head. The horse had come down so as to pin his rider securely beneath him:

With business-like promptitude Betty slipped out of her saddle, and leaving her mount to take care of itself, sat on the horse's head to prevent it from struggling. It was not romantic, but it was essentially practical.

Brooke's brain very soon cleared, and helpless though he was, with the weight of the horse still holding him down, he gave directions as calmly as though issuing orders on parade.

Seeing Betty, the first thing he said was: "Will one of you please relieve Miss Templeton of keeping his head still? Thanks," as a stalwart young farmer stepped forth to obey.

Betty got up and the young man took her place.

"Now, if one or two of you will come round here—just behind me—yes, that's it—and be ready to drag me out if a chance comes. Would you—and you, sir, get hold of the horse's fore-legs, and—"

But at that moment he was interrupted by a perfect shower of violent kicks as the animal struggled to rise to its feet. Unable to get away, Brooke set his teeth, and "took his chances," covering up his face and head as best he could with his arms.

One of the madly flying kicks struck his elbow and another his forearm, and though turning white with the horrible pain, he uttered no word—a momentary pause ensued in the storm of kicks; then, as in a flash, regardless of consequences to herself,

Betty, horrified at the thought of his imminent peril, had seized the death-dealing hind leg nearest to her, and held on to it with all her splendid strength:

And when Brooke saw the act and recognised the brave girl's danger, then, for the first time, was a groan extorted from him,

Before he could frame the words for begging her to release her hold and escape, the horse made another frantic effort to rise, hurling Betty violently to the ground, and struggling half-way to its feet, before again falling heavily.

But the attempt had probably saved Brooke's life; for no sooner was the weight momentarily taken off his legs than the two men already stationed behind him, in response to his shout, dragged him away by the shoulders, and when the horse, with a groan, again came crashing down, his rider was mercifully clear of him and lying in safety, some few feet away.

Many weeks elapsed before Brooke could be moved from the little inn, hard by the scene of his accident, whither he had been borne on a roughly improvised litter. And when, at length, he mended sufficiently to be taken to the house of his old friend, Admiral Seaford, the hunting season was over:

* * *

THE ADMIRAL INTERVENES.

GEORGE CHESNEY had started for India a few days after Brooke's accident, and it had been a sore trouble to him to leave his friend in such a plight. But the exigencies of the Service forbade delay, and most reluctantly he sailed, after enjoining Betty to constantly obtain news of the sufferer, and transmit it to him by wire and letter.

And Betty, who was always longing to be at the invalid's side, called assiduously, but never screwed up her courage to go in and sit with him:

"Suppose he shouldn't want me?" thought the girl fearfully:

She would hardly have thought that, could she have known that an old riding glove she had lost reposed beneath the sufferer's pillow, day and night, and that a hideous oleograph—a picture of a milkmaid, whose eyes and mouth bore a certain resemblance to Betty's, was hung, at his direction, immediately in front of his bed:

And during his tedious convalescence, the one thought which dominated him was of Betty. And the one question which dis-

turbed him, day and night, was "Can she ever care for me? I am so old, and she so gloriously fair and young. Dare I ask her to love a man like myself?"

The moment he had so longed for—that which witnessed the first meeting at the Admiral's house between himself and the girl he passionately loved—was a disappointing one. The meeting fell flat—for Betty was shy—and also a little shocked at the change which sharp suffering had made in his appearance. He still wanted careful nursing, and, above all, a woman's sympathy to make him again the strong man he had been:

So their interview was rather formal. And after a little conversation—of a horribly commonplace description—the girl left, her beautiful eyes full of tears, for—she hardly knew what. As she went to the door she ran right into the arms of the Admiral.

"Hullo, what's the matter, Betty, and where are you off to? Oh, home, eh? Nothing the matter, you say? Oh, yes, there is; don't tell me, I say! there are tears in your eyes—got a cold? damme—beg pardon, my dear, I'm sure—old men—old sailor men, you know—often like that—say things—well, well, I daresay I'm quite wrong—of course you *have* got a cold—old fool I was not to see that—well, good-bye, my dear, good-bye. I'll help you into the cart. There, tell the Colonel I'll come over on Tuesday—so glad he's nearly right again. What d'ye think of Ned? Looks as if he'd been living on ship's biscuit for a year, don't he? Never mind, get him well very soon, very soon. How's that young gentleman who pushed himself into the Peerage and got pushed out again, eh? Ho, ho!" he laughed. "Going to marry Miss Plesington, is he?" ran on the speaker. "Well, good-bye once more. Don't forget my message."

And as she drove away, the old gentleman thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his capacious trousers, pursed up his lips, and gave a prolonged whistle.

"I see what all this means. Here are two silly fools." And, drawing his hands out of his pockets again, he counted two fingers of his left hand and stuck them out as though they represented the culprits in question: "Two silly fools," he repeated, "each in love with the other, and what happens? Why, Silly Fool on the star-board side of the deck says: 'I'm not good enough for the lass I want to marry.' And

Silly Little Fool on the port side, what does she say? She says: 'Why doesn't this swab ask me to marry him? I shall go home and cry!' Fact is, they want the old Admiral to come aboard and bring 'em both to their hearings! And the old Admiral's come aboard! And he'll just go along and see Mr. Starboard Fool at once."

He burst into the room in which sat the invalid, staring moodily into the fireplace.

"Now, Ned," exclaimed the old gentleman brusquely, "seems to me you don't know what you're at—now don't say you don't know what I mean—I mean Betty—there, now you've got it—B-E-T-T-Y—Betty! D'ye understand? D'ye think I've been blind all this time and not noticed how you looked whenever her name was mentioned. D'ye think—"

But Colonel Brooke put up his hand, and with a humorous smile on his worn face, said:

"All right, Admiral, I plead guilty. I do love her. She is the sweetest, the—"

"Well, I didn't ever think to hear lovers' rhapsodies from 'The War Horse'! But we'll take all that for granted: Why, when I was a young man, I used to think all these things of *some* girl or other, in every port we touched at! That goes for nothing. But why don't you—"

"Admiral, tell me plainly, wouldn't it be the old story of May and December? She is so beautiful, so young, whilst I—I am old," said Brooke sadly.

"What!" snapped the Admiral, "and

you twenty years younger than I and I am a young man still! What other sea-lawyering will you be giving me next? Mark my words, Ned: as long as you remain without asking Betty Templeton to marry you, so long will you be a—a—a—chuckle-headed fool!"

And with this fearsome denunciation, Admiral Seafood stumped solemnly out of the room.

All this had taken place in the morning, and that afternoon, when luncheon was finished and the Admiral had dropped off for his customary hour's doze, Colonel Brooke had put on a mackintosh, and, hobbling painfully on a stick, made his way through the rain and wind to the Dower House.

That he must have had something interesting to say to Betty we infer from the fact that he took nearly three hours in which to say it. And when, at length, he got back to "The Moorings," tired out, but with his face radiant from joy, he was met by a perfect storm of abuse from the old Admiral for venturing out in such weather—this being the first occasion upon which he had even attempted walking since his accident.

"And to go out in a nor'-east gale and driving rain when you're still as weak as a cat, only proves that you must be a madman, sir, damme, I say a madman!"

Brooke laid his hand gently on his good old friend's shoulder and answered:

"At all events, Admiral—I am no longer a 'chuckle-headed fool'!"

THE NEEDFUL GUEST.

BY ALAN S. B. ARMSTRONG.

*The lord and lady of high degree
Sit, loaded with every luxury,
In their mansion proud and stately:
And yet, despite the sumptuous fare
Of choicest wines and viands rare,
His lordship's brow is heavy while
Her ladyship scarce gives a smile,
Though wedded only lately.
For he was rich and she was fair,
But troubled not if they did care
For one another greatly:
And that is why his lordship knits
His brows together as he sits,
And why her ladyship looks sad,
With every comfort to be had
In their mansion proud and stately;*

*The good man and his good wife share,
In calm content, their simple fare,
In their cottage poor and lowly:
For there's a guest who sits unseen
The good man and his wife between,
Whose presence like some precious flower
Pervades the air and, hour by hour,
Distils its essence slowly:
A little boy who comes on wings,
And with his advent ever brings
A peace both calm and holy.
And that is why the good wife's sony
Blends with her toil the whole day long,
And why the good man's honest eye
Grows brighter as his step draws nigh
To their cottage poor and lowly;*

Half-Minute Stories.

The Brightest and Best Little Stories of all Times.

Children are the best joke-makers, for their fun is entirely spontaneous, and no joke is so forcible as one which is made unconsciously and on the spur of the moment. This month I am publishing a number of anecdotes for which children are responsible. The majority of these are reprinted from a recently published collection of children's stories. Contributions to this feature are invited, and should be sent to "Half-Minute Stories," THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. In all cases the source of the anecdotes must be given.*

SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S PLANT.

TEACHER: "Now, Willie, what plant was it Sir Walter Raleigh discovered?"

Willie: "Don't know."

Teacher (trying to explain): "What does your father smoke?"

Willie (whose father is a fish-curer): "Haddocks."



PUSH.

In an engineer's shop the manager advertised for a smart lad for the office. The first lad that went to try for the position was asked what his motto in life was.

"The same as yours, sir," answered the lad.

"How do you know my motto?" asked the manager.

"It tells you on the door, sir; it says *Push!*"

The lad was started working at once.



A YOUNG FINANCIER.

NELLIE, whose grandfather began life as a cabin-boy and ended as a millionaire, was paid by her mother a penny a dozen for pins picked up from the carpet, to keep the baby from getting them.

"Nurse," said Nellie, as her stock of pennies increased, "do you know what I am going to do when I have sixpence?"

"No, miss."

"I am going to buy a paper of pins and scatter them over the floor, and then pick them up," replied the five-year-old financier.

WOULD HE?

"HARRY, you ought not to throw away nice bread like that; you may want it some day."

"Well, mamma, would I have any better chance of getting it then if I were to eat it now?" asked the child.



A POLITE LITTLE GIRL.

ON an examination day in a country school, the inspector jocularly said to a pretty, nicely-dressed little girl:

"Who's your mother?"

"Quite well, thank ye: hoo are ye, yersel?" was the reply.



EMBARRASSING!

A GENTLEMAN visited a new district police-station, and was shown over the building by the officer in charge. He related the circumstances of his visit at home in the hearing of his little boy.

A few weeks later the parent took Tommy with him on a journey by rail one day:

"Oh, papa," said Tommy, upon seeing a large, gloomy-looking building, "what place is that?"

"That's the county gaol, Tommy," said the parent.

Whereupon the irrepressible youngster exclaimed, to the embarrassment of his father and the amusement of the other occupants of the carriage:

"Eh! Is that the gaol you were in, papa?"

* "Children's Answers," Written by Rev. J. H. Burn, and published by Anthony Trollope & Co. Ltd., 12 York Buildings, Adelphi, W.C., at 2s. net.

WHAT IT IS TO BE GOOD.

MOTHER (to troublesome boy): "Oh, dear, Johnny, I don't believe you know what it is to be good!"

Johnny: "Yes, I do, mamma. It's not doing what you want to do."

A NEAR APPROACH.

LITTLE GIRL: "Did you ever dream of being in Heaven?"

Little Boy: "No, not exactly; but I dreamt once that I was right in the middle of a big apple-dumpling."

WHISTLE YOUR HAT BACK AGAIN.

It isn't safe to deceive children even in fun. This was shown very plainly at one time by the experience of an Englishman and his son upon a railway journey which they took together:

While the little fellow was gazing out of the open window, his father slipped the hat off the boy's head in such a way as to make his son believe that it had fallen out of the window. The boy was very much upset by his supposed loss, when his father consoled him by saying that he would "whistle it back." A little later he whistled, and the hat reappeared.

Not long after the little lad seized upon his father's hat, and, flinging it out of the window, shouted:

"Now, papa, whistle your hat back again!"

LONDON MILK.

A LITTLE boy from London went into the country visiting. He had a bowl of milk and bread. He tasted it, and then hesitated a moment, when his mother asked him if he didn't like it, to which he replied, smacking his lips:

"Yes, ma, I was wishing our milkman would keep a cow."

TRANSPARENT.

HELOISE (eight years old): "What does transatlantic mean, mother?"

Mother: "Oh, across the Atlantic, of course. But you mustn't bother me."

Heloise: "Does trans, then, always mean across?"

Mother: "I suppose it does. Now, if you don't stop bothering me with your questions, I shall send you right to bed."

Heloise is silent a few minutes.

Heloise: "Then does transparent mean a cross parent?"

WHAT HE PUTS ON.

TEACHER (trying to explain the meaning of the word "harness" to a small boy): "What does your father put on the horse?"

Small boy (his face brightening): "'E puts on all 'e can if 'e thinks it'll win."

NOT FAIR.

MOLLIE had been to church for the first time, and on her return home her grandmother asked her what she thought of it.

"I liked it very much," she replied, "but there was one thing I didn't think was fair."

"What was that, dear?"

"Why, one man did all the work, and then another man came round and got all the money."

"O QUEEN, LIVE FOR EVER!"

THREE children were walking along the road between Windsor and Stoke Poges. They heard the sound of carriage wheels. It was Queen Victoria's carriage and she was in it. The oldest child, a little boy, had been reading Oriental stories and fairy lore. He knew what was due to a queen, and cried to the others:

"Get down flat in the dust before the carriage and we'll call out all at once: 'O Queen, live for ever!'"

Down went the three little bodies flat in the dust, much to the mystification of the coachman, who reined up sharply. The Queen leant forward and asked: "What in the world is the matter, children? Are you frightened?"

Three voices came out of the dust in a smothered treble:

"Yes, O Queen!"

Then there was a pause, and one reproachful voice said: "There, we forgot the 'live for ever' part!"

The Queen grasped the situation, and laughed aloud, as her coachman afterwards said "more heartily than she had laughed for years."

IN SAFE CUSTODY.

"GRANNY," said little Maggie, as she counted over a lot of hazelnuts somebody had given her; "can you eat nuts?"

"No, dear," said the old lady, "I have no teeth."

"Well, then," said Maggie, emptying her pinafore into granny's lap, "I'll give you these to mind till I come back."

LIGHTNING IS CHEAP.

"WHAT is the difference between lightning and electricity?"

"You don't have to pay nuffin' for lightning."



WHAT WILL FATHER SAY?

COUNTRY MINISTER (to boy fishing): "What will your father say, little boy, when he discovers that you have been fishing on Sunday?"

Boy: "I dunno, sir; it depends on how many fish I ketch."



THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

THE schoolmaster of a certain village asked his pupils the following question:

"Suppose in a family there are five children, and mother has only four potatoes between them: Now, she wants to give every child an equal share. What is she going to do?"

Silence reigned in the room:

Everybody calculated very hard, till a little boy stood up and gave, to the great surprise of the schoolmaster, the following unexpected answer:

"Mash the potatoes, sir."



MAN'S CHIEF END.

"WHAT is man's chief end?"

"The end that has his head on."



POMPS AND VANITIES.

A RATHER pompous, gaily-dressed lady said to her Sunday class:

"Give me an illustration of the pomps and vanities of the world?"

The answer of one of her pupils was honest but unexpected:

"Them flowers in your hat, miss."



DOT'S KNOWLEDGE.

LITTLE DOT: "I know something that my teacher doesn't know."

Mother: "Indeed! What is that?"

Little Dot: "I know when the world is coming to an end, and the teacher doesn't, for I asked her, and she said she didn't know."

Mother: "Oh! Well, who told you?"

Little Dot: "Uncle John: He said the world would come to an end when children stopped asking questions that nobody can answer."

LUCKY HE STOPPED PRAYING!

A SMALL boy prayed long and ineffectually for a little brother. At last he gave it up as "no use." Soon after, his mother had the pleasure of showing him twin babies. He looked at them a moment, and then exclaimed:

"How lucky it was that I stopped praying! There might have been *three*!"



HEAT EXPANDS AND COLD CONTRACTS.

"It is a well-known natural phenomenon that heat expands and cold contracts. Now give me an instance of this."

"Please, sir, the holidays. In Summer they last seven weeks; in Winter only five."



SOMETHING FOR THE BIRD.

A TEACHER was taking a lesson on the use of the hyphen.

Having written a number of examples on the black-board, the first of which was "bird-cage," he asked the boys to give a reason for putting the hyphen between "bird" and "cage."

After a short silence one boy, who is among the dunces, held up his hand, and said:

"It is for the bird to perch on, sir."



FOUND BY A LAUGH.

A LITERARY man, who was compelled by circumstances to use his family sitting-room as a study, missed his penholder one evening while absorbed in writing a story.

He looked over his desk, through the pigeon-holes, and in the drawers, but it was nowhere in sight. It was not on the floor. He felt behind his ear; it was not there.

"This is what comes," he said impatiently, "of trying to work where there is a houseful of children. Which one of you has taken my pen?"

The children looked at each other and laughed. He became irritated.

"I don't want any foolishness," he muttered. "Where's that pen? Who has taken it?"

After a moment's pause one of the children said slowly:

"If you'll laugh, papa, you will find it."

He stared at her in astonishment. Then, as her meaning slowly broke in upon him, he joined in the laugh, and the penholder fell out of his mouth, where it had been all the time.

PAID FOR A JOKE.

A WELL-KNOWN novelist tells the story of his first sixpence, which he earned by an unpremeditated joke.

His father for twenty-seven years had been engaged in a suit in Chancery, and had just gained his case. The expenses of the suit, however, had swallowed up the entire estate, the residue being merely three shillings and sixpence.

My father ranged the seven sixpences on the breakfast-table.

"My boy," said he, "see what comes of going to law in Great Britain! Your mother has told you that I have won my suit in Chancery!"

"Yes, papa."

"Well then, look! That is all I get out of it," and he pointed grimly to the sixpences. I opened wide my eyes.

"All you get of the whole suit!" I echoed, with a puzzled air, convinced that a suit in Chancery was composed, as other suits are, of a coat, waistcoat, and trousers. "Why, papa, those are only the buttons!"

It was this deplorable joke that earned me my sixpence, for my father, laughing, tossed me one across the table, and I rushed off like a dog pelted with a bone.

TANGENT.

TEACHER: "What is a tangent? You may answer, James."

James: "A gent that runs a tan-yard."

NOT EXTRAVAGANT.

A NURSE said to a little child: "I can't allow you butter and jam too on your bread."

"But, nurse," he said, "it can't be extravagant if the same piece of bread does for both."

MORE BAGS TO BURST.

ON examining a class of infants on arithmetic, the teacher asked whether they would prefer three paper bags with two oranges in each, or two paper bags with three oranges in each?

All except one little fellow expressed themselves without preference, but he said he would prefer the three bags. On the teacher asking him a reason for his choice, he said:

"'Cos I would have more bags to burst!"

SHEEP PENS.

"MAMMA," said an interesting child, "do sheep write?"

"Sheep write! No: What made you think of that?"

"Because, mamma, I was reading about sheep pens; and why are they provided with pens if they do not write?"

NINE, OR SIX?

"How old are you, Tommy?"

"Nine when I'm on my feet, and six when I stand on my head."

"That's funny; how do you make it?"

"Why, if you stand a 9 on its head, it's a 6, isn't it?"

QUITE SAFE.

CLERGYMAN: "My child, beware of picking a toadstool instead of a mushroom: They are easy to confuse."

Child: "That be all roight, sur, that be! Us bain't a-goin' to eat 'em ourselves—they're a-goin' to market to be sold."

BADLY EXPRESSED.

PEOPLE are often apt to say things which, after uttering, they wish they had expressed differently. For example:—

Mrs. B. (who is calling on Mrs. C. for a maid's character): "Now, what is your candid opinion of the girl?"

Mrs. C.: "Well, she did not suit me at all. She has no idea of waiting at table, pushes things on anyhow, and is not neat in her appearance. But I think she would suit you very well."

And again:—

After the weekly mothers' meeting, the Rector's wife was leaving the Parish Hall when she met a friend.

The friend greeted her and was about to shake hands, when she was almost paralysed by the remark:

"No, I won't shake hands with you—I've shaken hands already with so many dirty people!"

Readers are asked to submit stories of a similar nature to the foregoing, and payment will be made for any *new and original* ones published. Anecdotes must be sent to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than August 2nd. Mark your envelope "Expression," in the top left-hand corner. Where the anecdotes submitted are not original their source must be stated.

Accounts of some really extraordinary Coincidences were received in our recent competition. Here are the most wonderful.

A KINGLY COINCIDENCE.

WHEN Queen Victoria died and King Edward came to the throne, the news was, of course, cabled out to Australia:

That same evening, a lady living in Melbourne opened her Bible to read a few verses at bedtime, and the first verse she read had in it the words: "And all the people shouted and said, God Save the King."

The lady affirms that she never knew before that these words were in the Bible:



A LUCKY ENCOUNTER.

THE Paymaster-in-Chief of the Royal Navy sends the following:—

In January, 1883, on my way home from Madagascar, I was for a fortnight at the Cape, making the acquaintance at Wynberg of an extremely nice man—a Member of the Legislative Assembly. He was then going to England, and gave me his address, which was to find him *up to the end of May*.

I was unable to be in London till July, and put up in Craven Street, at my old rooms. Almost the first thing I thought of was how to find out my friend, as he had presumably left the address he gave me.

Full of the intention of finding him by inquiry at the Agent-General's or at the Colonial Institute, I went downstairs from my room, opened the door, and ran straight into my friend's arms. It was the more remarkable, inasmuch as he lived far away—in Cromwell Road—and he didn't know *why* he had turned from the Strand into so quiet a street as Craven Street:



STRANGE, INDEED!

MR. FLYNN, who lived in the south of Ireland, one evening gave a dinner-party: In the course of conversation he happened to mention an incident of his school life, in which two others took part, and which took place years before in Dublin:

He then said, speaking of one of the two: "I never heard since what became of young Blank: I don't know whether he is dead or alive."

He had scarcely spoken the words when the very person he was speaking of was announced. The newcomer said he was passing through the town, and having incidentally heard the name mentioned, thought he would see if Flynn were his old schoolfellow:

FOUND IN THE TRAIN.

A GENTLEMAN named Harold Godwyn traveled from Peckham Rye station to London Bridge one morning. In his compartment was one other passenger only, about the same height and build as Godwyn, and like him dressed in a black frock suit and silk hat. By his side lay a small black bag almost the counterfeit of Godwyn's:

When the train reached London Bridge, this passenger opened the carriage door before the train stopped, leapt out upon the platform, and was quickly swallowed up by the crowd of hurrying passengers. He left his bag behind him, so Godwyn carried it to the Lost Property Office, where the attendant opened it and found this inscription written inside:

"The property of Harold Godwyn!"

The two men actually had the same name!



CORNERED BY A SHARK.

IN the days when slave-traders dealt illegally in slaves, they often carried them from port to port in "slave dhows."

An English Naval officer, Captain D., on the look-out for slave-traders, sighted one morning what he thought was a slave dhow, and gave chase. On coming up with her he went on board, and finding negroes there, demanded from the captain his papers, showing that he dealt in slaves. The captain declared emphatically that he carried no such papers, therefore the Englishman had to retire:

The same day some sailors on the English ship caught a shark, and on cutting it open, found inside a small tin box, containing papers, which proved that the other ship had slaves on board.

Captain D., on discovering this, gave chase again and came up with the other ship in a port, where she was unloading her cargo. He demanded to see the captain, and, wasting few words, produced the tin box of papers. When the slave-trader saw them, he turned deathly pale, and, shaking with fright, made a full confession, how he had been carrying slaves to sell at the port, and on seeing the English man-of-war following him, he threw the tin box overboard, little thinking that it would be swallowed by one of the sharks following the vessel and come to light again:

Miss Moberly's work needs no introduction to readers of THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, but this story is written in a somewhat different vein from usual. In the letter which gives her reasons for selecting this story as her best, Miss Moberly says: "You ask me to say why I consider this my best story! I really hardly know why I think so, excepting that I believe it to be one of my best written ones, and to have a certain human interest. Before I began to write professionally (six or seven years ago) I was trained as a nurse at Guy's, and my hospital experience has helped me in this story, as in many others. There is a foundation of fact in the account of the big funeral for the little, unpretending man—a funeral very much of this sort actually having taken place."

An Unprofitable Servant.

By L. G. MOBERLY.

WE never thought much of him when we were all fellow-students together at St. Chad's Hospital. "Poor old Parkes," he was generally called, and by those who knew him best, "poor old Tom." He was such a funny, original sort of fellow, a queer mingling of the casual and the hard-working. His figure was familiar to more than one set of St. Chad's students, for he spent an abnormal time in getting through his exams., and as he used to say ruefully:

"I'm such a fool of a fellow; things seem to go in at one of my ears, and out at the other. I can't for the life of me remember the names of them."

An examination drove every scrap of knowledge he possessed straight out of his head. It paralysed him, and he was the despair of his teachers and examiners. Indeed, it was several times more than hinted to him that he might be wiser in adopting some other than the medical profession; but he always shook his head over such a proposition.

"No, no, I can't give it up. It's the finest profession in the world, and I'm going to stick to it."

When I left the hospital, he was still plodding on patiently and hopefully. He came sometimes to my rooms in the days before I left, and poured out his aims and ideals to me. I don't exactly know why he chose me for his confidant, excepting that I had tried to be friendly now and then to the poor fellow. It seemed to me hard lines that he should be so universally laughed at and looked down upon.

He had some wonderfully lofty notions about a doctor's work. I can see him now,

as he stood on my hearthrug, talking fast and eagerly about the moral influence a doctor ought to have over his patients, and I could not help wondering what sort of influence poor old Tom would have over his patients (if he ever had any patients at all).

He did not look a very impressive object in those days. He was always rather an untidy sort of chap. His clothes hung upon his loose, shambling figure a little as if he were a clothes-prop; his hair—it was red—had a way of falling loosely over his forehead, which gave him a habit of tossing back his head to shake the straying locks from his eyes. He had no beauty to recommend him. His eyes were green, and they were not handsome, though their prevailing expression was one of good temper and kindness. His smile was wide and kindly, yet nevertheless his whole countenance bordered closely on the grotesque, and the more he talked of ideals and lofty aspirations, the more acutely did he tickle my inward sense of humour.

Tom's talk and his personality did not fit well!

As I have said, I left him behind me at St. Chad's, when my hospital days were over. I carried away with me a vivid recollection of the grip of his big, red hand, when he exclaimed:

"Good-bye, Marlow. I say, I wish you weren't going, you know. You've—you've been jolly good to me." There was a queer look of wistfulness in his eyes. It reminded me of the look in the eyes of my Irish terrier when I left him behind me at home.

"Poor old Tom," I thought. "I'll come

and look him up now and then: He's a lonely sort of chap."

I am sorry now that I did not stick to my resolution, but other interests soon filled my life, and I forgot to look Tom Parkes up, or even to ask him to come and see me. Then I left town, and shortly afterwards I went out of England, and for eight years or so I did not set foot in London again:

Shortly after my return I went down to St. Chad's, and as I strolled round the old hospital, feeling a terrible Rip Van Winkle among all the "new men, new faces, other minds," I all at once bethought me of old Parkes. A stab of remorse smote me. What a beast I had been never to think of the poor chap in all these years. Was he, perhaps, still at St. Chad's, toiling at exams. which he never passed? Later on I called upon the Dean of the medical school, and asked him if he could give me any news of Parkes.

"Poor old Parkes," Dr. Thursby said, smiling. "Oh, yes, I can tell you where he is. He has a sort of surgery in Paradise Street, in the Borough: He is not making his fortune, I gather."

He gave me the address of a street about half-an-hour's walk from St. Chad's, and thither I repaired on the following evening, with a laudable determination to find Tom Parkes, and cheer him up a bit:

"For it must be precious dull living in these God-forsaken slums," I thought, as I walked down a forlorn little street—a facsimile of thousands of others of its type, which all present an appearance of having been forgotten when the dustman went his rounds. Bits of things of all kinds littered not only the gutters, but even the roadway and pavement: The dwellers in Paradise Street evidently used the road as their dustbin, paper basket, and general rubbish heap. It was unsavoury as well as unsightly. It belied its name. It bore no resemblance to any Paradise. Each house exactly resembled its neighbours in greyness and dreariness, but over one door was a red lamp, and upon the same door a small brass plate, bearing the words: "Mr. Tom Parkes, surgeon."

Poor old Tom! There flashed before my mind his wistful ideals of a possible house in Harley Street in some dim future. This depressing street in the Borough must have choked his ideals considerably: As I knocked at the door I noticed how the paint was peeling off it, how dilapidated was the bell-pull, how rickety the knocker: It was

plain that times were not good for the dwellers in Paradise Street.

The door was opened almost at once, and Tom himself stood before me. In the dim light I thought he looked much the same Tom as when I had last seen him eight years before, excepting that his face seemed to be older and thinner and whiter. He flushed when he caught sight of me, and his eyes grew bright.

"Why, Marlow," he exclaimed, grasping my hand, "I say, I am jolly glad to see you. It's awfully good of you to come down here, and—and—" I saw his eyes running over my clothes, which were perfectly ordinary; but—well, the poor chap was so wofully shabby himself, it, made my heart ache.

"I say," he went on hesitatingly, still holding the door wide open, "I've got poor sort of diggings. Do you mind coming in? My landlady is out to-day, and we're in a bit of a muddle."

"Mind? My dear chap, of course not: I want to have a chat, if you can spare time?"

"I'm free just this minute," he said, "but I expect some patients will drop in presently, and I may be sent for, too: I'm rather busy just now, that's the truth: There's such a lot of influenza and typhoid about."

"Making your fortune, eh, Parkes?" I asked, as I followed him down a grimy passage into a small, dingy room.

He smiled, but the look in his eyes gave me a queer lump in my throat:

"Not much," he said; "you see, you can't—well, you can't take fees from people who—well, who are starving themselves."

I glanced sharply at him. In the better light I could see that his own face was terribly thin, and his eyes had a curious, sunken look: Good Heavens! how thin the man was! His chest seemed to have sunk in, and he had acquired a stoop which I could not associate with the red-faced, hearty student of eight years before.

The room into which he ushered me was bare of everything but the merest necessities, and those of the cheapest and commonest kind:

"This is my consulting room," he said, with a little smile; "the patients wait next door." And he pointed through half-open folding doors into a second and even barer room, that was furnished only with a few chairs:

He pushed me into the only arm-chair his

room possessed, an uncompromising and ancient horsehair chair, stuffed, judging by the sensation it produced, with stones!

He seemed pleased to see me, but he talked very little; it was hard to think that he could be the same being who had stood beside my fireplace in the old days, talking so volubly of all his hopes and plans. I had not been with him more than a quarter of an hour when a knock came at the outer door. Tom answered it in person, and returned, accompanied by an old woman.

"That's another doctor, granny," he said, nodding towards me; "you don't mind him, do you?"

The old lady having signified that she had no objection to my presence, proceeded to give a lengthy and graphic account of her various ailments.

Parkes listened to it all with a patient interest which I could not but admire. Something in his tone, as he spoke to the old woman, struck me particularly—an indescribable ring of sympathy, of gentleness, which I cannot put into words. Having taken up a good half hour and more of his time, the old lady rose to depart, drawing her miserable shawl round her.

"Oh, doctor, dear," she whispered, as he told her to send up in the morning for some fresh medicine, "and I ain't got nothin' to give yer, for yer kindness. Will yer let it go till next time? Jem 'e've 'eard of a job, and if 'e was to get it——"

A faint smile showed in Tom's eyes.

"All right, granny," he said gently; "times are hard just now, aren't they?"

"You're right, doctor, so they be. What with the cold, and the strikes, and the influenzy, there ain't much doin' for pore folks."

He opened the door for her as if she had been a duchess, and before admitting the next patient (several had arrived in the waiting-room by this time), he said to me wistfully, almost apologetically:

"They're awfully poor just now. One can't make them pay. I know philanthropic people call it pauperising, and all that, but——" He broke off lamely.

"Why don't you send them up as out-patients to St. Chad's?" I asked.

"It's a long way from here, isn't it? A good half hour's walk; and then it means a lot of waiting about, and perhaps losing work. It doesn't seem fair to send them so far, and we've no hospital nearer here."

He said no more, and I stayed on, fascinated, in spite of myself.

The same thing happened over and over again that evening. Half-starved looking men and women shamefacedly asked to be let off any payment, and the same answer met them all, in a cheery voice, which somehow did not seem to go with Tom's bent, thin form.

"Oh, that'll be all right. We'll settle up when times are better, won't we?"

When the last patient had gone, he turned to me, his face flushing.

"I say, Marlow," he said, "I'm awfully sorry I can't offer you supper; but the truth is, my landlady is out, and—and so I shan't have my supper at home." He tried to speak jocosely, but my own impression was that he did not expect to have any supper anywhere.

"Look here, old fellow," I said, "I'm going to have something somewhere. Come with me for auld lang syne."

I could hardly bear to see the look that came into his eyes. It reminded me of a starved dog I had once fed.

"Thanks, awfully," he answered; "but my old working clothes aren't decent to go out in, and——"

Oh, I could guess well enough where his other clothes were! But, of course, I only laughed, and replied:

"Nonsense, old fellow, never mind the working clothes; I'm certainly too hungry to wait whilst you make yourself smart. Let's go to a quiet restaurant. I shall be offended if you don't come."

"I'd like to come," he said, and the eagerness in his tones made my heart ache again. "I've got a lot of patients to go and see later—influenza and so on, and I'd be glad of a snack of something first." He tried to speak carelessly, but it was a failure.

I felt ashamed, downright ashamed, of myself for being well nourished and well clad, as I sat opposite poor old Parkes in that restaurant. It made me choky over and over again, I can tell you, to see the man put away that meal.

Before we parted I tried to persuade him to let me lend him a little spare cash. I put it as nicely as I could, saying I knew that doctoring in a poor neighbourhood was very uphill work. But he shook his head.

"It's awfully good of you," he said; "but I haven't ever borrowed, and I don't know when I could pay back. I shouldn't like a debt."

And I could not move his resolution.

"You'll look me up again some day?" he asked.

"Rather; as soon as possible."

But a summons to a distant part of England on important family business, kept me out of town for three weeks, and when I went next to the house in Paradise Street, poor old Parkes did not open the door to me.

A frouzy landlady confronted me.

"The doctor, sir? 'E's awfully bad: 'E've a-got up, as I persuaded him not to, with such a cough. But 'e says: 'I must see to my patients,' and so 'e's a-sittin' in 'is room as ought to be in bed. 'E was took on Saturday, as to-day is Wednesday," she ended.

I pushed past her into the consulting room, and there sat Tom in the arm-chair, beside an apology for a fire, coughing and gasping for breath. A wonderful relief came into his face as he saw me.

"I'm—I'm awfully glad to see you," he whispered; "got—a touch of the 'flu'—I think."

He spoke gaspingly, as though speech were painful.

"I'll tackle this patient for you, old man," I said, glancing at an old woman who sat before him. "Look here, let me help you on to the couch."

He could hardly stand, and I almost lifted him on to the horsehair sofa of unprepossessing appearance, and after getting rid of the old patient, turned all my attention to making Tom comfortable.

"It's nothing much," he gasped: "I've just got—a touch—of influenza—such—a lot—about," he muttered wearily; "such—bad nights—so many sick—and dying—and dying—"

He rambled on, whilst the landlady and I brought his bed into the consulting room, and I lifted him upon it, and undressed him. It was pitiful to see his thinness.

"Pore gentleman!" the landlady exclaimed: "E've bin and starved 'isself, that's what it is; and many's the time I've a-brought 'im in a bite of somethin' we've bin 'avin', and 'e says always so cheery: 'Now, that's kind of you, Mrs. Jones,' and never missed payin' the rent neither, though Lord knows 'ow 'e got it. 'E've a-put away 'most everythin'," she whispered, whilst I stood looking down at the flushed face, and bright, unseeing eyes, and listening to his rambling, disconnected talk.

We did our best for him. I fetched one of the leading physicians of the day, but he only shook his head:

"Absolutely hopeless," he said, "absolutely hopeless, poor fellow."

"And 'im always a-slavin'," sobbed Mrs. Jones. "'E was always out day and night in these streets, and in 'is thin coat, and starvin' 'isself; 't'ain't no wonder 'e got the pneumony, or whatever they calls it; 'e never thought of 'isself, never once."

I sat by him that same night: Towards morning his restlessness ceased, and he turned clear eyes upon me, and whispered:

"I've made a poor thing of it, and—I—meant—to—do—big—things."

I don't know what I said, but he went on:

"I say—what's that—about—about—an—unprofitable servant? That's—me—an—unprofitable—servant. I—meant to do—a lot. I've—done—nothing—nothing—an—unprofitable—servant."

I'm not a very religious sort of chap, but somehow, when he said those words, some others came into my head, and I whispered:

"Not unprofitable, old fellow; there's something else in the same Book, isn't there, about a 'good and faithful servant'? That's nearer the mark for you."

A queer smile swept over his face, a curious light stole into his eyes.

"Unprofitable—or faithful? Which?" he murmured.

They were the last words I heard from poor old Parkes' lips.

I was obliged to be out of town again for the three days after his death, but I made all arrangements that the funeral should be a decent one, and I determined to be present at it myself, for I couldn't bear to think of the poor old chap going lonely to his last, long home.

There was a gleam of wintry sun upon London, as I walked quickly through the Borough on the morning of Tom's funeral, a bunch of white flowers in my hand. I did not like to think that no one would put a flower on his coffin, and I knew he had no relations.

As I entered the thoroughfare out of which Paradise Street opens, I was surprised to find myself upon the outskirts of a dense crowd of people. The traffic was at a standstill; the few policemen visible were absolutely powerless to do anything with the mass of human beings that stretched as far down the street as I could see, and blocked every corner. In fact, the police had given up attempting to do anything but keep order, which was not difficult, for a more silent, well-behaved crowd I never saw. I

looked in vain for its cause. My first thought was that there must be a fire, but no signs of such a thing were visible.

I touched a policeman's arm.

"What is it all about?" I asked: "Can I get through?"

"Don't look much like it, sir; 'tis a funeral."

"A funeral? But I never saw such a crowd even at the funerals of very distinguished people. Who in the world is grand enough in these parts to have a following like this?"

"'Tis a——" he began, then turned hastily to cry: "Pass on there, pass on, please." A sheer impossibility, by the way, for no one could move an inch:

"What does it all mean?" I said to a man beside me, a rough costermonger, who, like myself, held a bunch of flowers in his hand.

"'Tis the doctor's funeral," he replied.

"What doctor?" I asked, mystified: "Why, I'm going to a doctor's funeral, too, but my poor friend wasn't well known; he won't have crowds to follow him: He lived in Paradise Street, poor chap."

"So did our doctor," the man answered, and he drew his grimy hand across his eyes; "maybe 'tis the same: 'Tis Dr. Parkes as we've come to see laid in 'is grave: 'E was good to us, and 'tis the last thing we will ever do for 'im."

"Do you mean to tell me that this enormous crowd——" I stammered.

"'Tis the followin' for Dr. Parkes, yes, sir; 'tis a sight you don't see but once in a lifetime, neither. Most of us chaps 'as 'ad to give up a day's work to come; but, bless you, we don't grudge it to he; no, that we don't." And the man gave a little gulp:

This was Tom Parkes' following? And I had thought that I should be his only follower! I was but one among many hundreds!

When they knew I was the dead man's friend, they somehow at once made a way

for me through the crowd, which grew denser and denser as I walked down Paradise Street—a strange, reverent, silent crowd.

Just as I reached the door, they were carrying the coffin out; it was one mass of flowers, and I, poor fool, had thought pityingly that my insignificant bunch would be the only one upon it! They told me afterwards that men and women had spent their hard-won earnings to buy these wreaths for the doctor they loved—men and women who could with difficulty spare their money, who were having a hand-to-hand struggle themselves for existence:

I have never seen such a sight as that funeral, never in my life. All the way to the far-off cemetery, those thousands of men and women—aye, and even children, followed their doctor, and it seemed as though the great, silent crowd would never cease filing past his grave afterwards, when all was over:

"'E said as 'ow 'e 'ad failed, sir," his landlady sobbed that evening, when I went round to see after poor old Tom's few little things; "'e said 'is life was all a mistake, but lor', it don't look much like a mistake, sir: Why, the good 'e've done, and the influence 'e've 'ad in these 'ere courts, no one wouldn't believe, as hadn't seen 'is funeral: 'Twas a wonderful buryin', sir."

Truly a wonderful burying!

* * * * *

I wrote to many of his fellow-students to try to raise enough money to put a stone over the poor old fellow. But we were forestalled in this by the people amongst whom he had worked—for whom he had died! They collected the money—those folk in the back streets of the Borough—in farthings, and halfpence, and pence, and they put a white cross over his grave. And upon the cross they engraved his name and these words:

"THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."



The Saving of Ardcraig. ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By SINGLETON GAREW.

The story of a search for hidden treasure.

THE TREASURE SHIP.

"WHY, father, you're looking quite worried! Hasn't the treasure-hunt been going well of late? I noticed you had left off mentioning it in your letters."

The speaker was Jack Alroy, a good-looking, broad-shouldered young undergraduate of Oxford. He and his brother Frank, a year his junior, had arrived home at their father's house on the remote Scottish island of Ardcraig but an hour previously.

Old Mr. Alroy passed a trembling hand over his thin face and smiled faintly.

"I am worried, laddie," he said at last. "More worried than I can tell you. In a very few weeks"—his voice faltered—"I may be no longer laird of Ardcraig, and the old home may pass from us to a stranger."

"What on earth do you mean, pater?" cried Frank anxiously. "I know you're not wealthy, but we're not in debt. How can—"

The old gentleman stopped him, shaking his silvery head ruefully.

"On the contrary, laddie," he replied. "I am in debt—head over ears in debt—and it's all through the treasure-ship! I wish to Heaven I had never discovered it!"

"All through the treasure-ship!" repeated Jack. "I don't understand, father. Tell us about it."

"I will," said Mr. Alroy. "You are my heirs, and it is right that you should know everything. Just lock that door, laddie; I would not have your mother know of this for anything; the shock would break her heart. And yet she must be told ere long!"

"It's a sad story," he began; "the story of an old man's foolishness, I daresay you will think. But don't blame me until you have heard me out. As you know, a year or two ago I discovered the submerged wreck of an old Spanish galleon, one of the Armada stragglers, in Ardcraig Bay. Her

name I found out to be the *Santa Teresa*, and further delving into history disclosed the fact that she was one of the pay-ships of Philip's fleet, and carried a goodly store of doubloons in her hold. That you also know. The last time you came home from the 'Varsity, if you remember, I had about half-a-dozen men at work trying to dig away the accumulation of sand in the interior of the vessel. Now comes the part that you do not know.

"I saw we were making no progress; I hadn't the money to buy the necessary apparatus for doing good work under water. And then Fate put temptation in my way. A man came to the island—a visitor from Glasgow. His name was Levinstein, a German Jew, I fancy. His appearance was not over-prepossessing, but he seemed a decent man, and, seeing how lonely we are here, I invited him up to the house one evening. We got talking on a variety of subjects, and somehow or other, before I realised what I was doing, I had told him all about the *Santa Teresa*, and the small progress I was making towards salving the treasure. Levinstein was interested, but he didn't seem to have much faith in the existence of the doubloons. 'As a man of the world,' he told me, 'I've seen too many of these hidden treasure businesses peter out.'

"I'm certain the treasure is there," I said. 'The only thing is, I can't get at it; I haven't the money, worse luck!' Well, he made no further comment then, but some days later we met again, when he said: 'Look here, Mr. Alroy, I'm a wealthy man, and I sometimes go in for a little speculation. You want money for this scheme of yours. What security would you give me if I advanced you a thousand or two?'

"Perhaps you would care to take a share in the venture?' I began, but he cut me short.

"That won't do for me," he said.

'That's too risky altogether. Real estate's more in my way.' Well, to cut a long story short, boys, he finally won me over. In return for a loan of three thousand pounds, repayable in six months' time, with five per cent. interest, I gave him as security this island and everything upon it."

He paused, looking at the lads' horrified faces wistfully, but ere they could speak he went on:

"I must have been mad; I realise it now. But I was full of hope; with three thousand pounds I could buy proper equipment, engage more men, and have the treasure up long before the time for repayment came. Little did I know how I was deluding myself!

"I bought the equipment and engaged the men, but we have made no progress worth mentioning; the sand flows in almost as fast as we can get it out. And in three weeks' time the money and interest are due; I have here a letter from Levinstein reminding me of the fact. He says he will come over for it: I haven't got it—not a tenth of it! I've thrown away your inheritance, lads, the place that has been the home of our family for centuries!"

He bowed his head upon his hands and sobbed bitterly:

With an impulsive gesture Jack sprang to his feet, tears glittering in his eyes:

"Don't take it to heart like that, pater," he said gently. "Neither Frank nor I blame you. Perhaps we can induce this Levinstein to wait for his money. It's too good a bargain altogether; Ard Craig is worth more than three thousand."

"He won't wait, I'm sure," answered the old gentleman brokenly. "Directly I was in his power I began to feel there was an iron hand inside his velvet glove. The value of the estate has got nothing to do with it; if I can't repay the loan it will fall to him."

"Poor mother!" said Frank, breaking a painful silence. "It will kill her to leave the old home. Surely we can do *something*, Jack? I don't feel like losing Ard Craig without a struggle."

"Neither do I," answered his brother grimly. "Is there *no* hope of getting at the treasure, father? If we could only raise just a little gold—enough to prove that the treasure was there—we might get someone to advance enough to pay this Levinstein off."

Mr. Alroy shook his head despondently:

"Go down and see for yourself," he said:

"The men have worked like heroes—they scented something was wrong with me—but the sand has beaten us. It's no good, laddies; three weeks from now we shall be homeless."

A look of defiant resolution crossed Jack's handsome face:

"I'll be hanged if I'll take it like that!" he cried. "We *must* try to save the old home. Come, Frank, we'll go down and have a look round now. We've got three weeks to find a way out of the mess. Perhaps in that time we can think of some means of saving Ard Craig and paying off this wretched Levinstein!"

* * *

MR. LEVINSTEIN ARRIVES.

THE two brothers went down to the shore sadly, discussing the impending calamity. The possibility of losing their island home—the cradle of the Alroys for centuries past—seemed too dreadful to contemplate. If their father's theories were correct, only a few feet of sand and water separated them from a treasure rich enough to pay off a hundred such debts. The irony of the situation was too poignant to be borne patiently, and many were the schemes the pair discussed, only to abandon them as impossible.

The wreck of the *Santa Teresa* lay close inshore in about a dozen feet of water, hard by a rocky ledge. Mr. Alroy had built a shed on the rocks at a point near the wreck, while a large lighter was moored exactly over it. The half dozen workmen already employed in the salvage operations were engaged with a sand-pump when the two undergraduates came down to the water's edge, but in response to a hail two men came ashore in a boat and rowed them out to the lighter. The men—with the exception of the diver—were all natives of Ard Craig, and they greeted the laird's sons affectionately:

"Pleased to meet ye, gentlemen," said Bowyer, the diver, a stolid-looking man of middle-age. "Sorry we ain't got no treasure to show ye; the blessed sand's beaten us."

"So my father was saying," replied Jack. "And yet I can't understand it; the bottom of the bay is nearly all rock. I've dived down many a time as a youngster."

"That may be, sir," said the diver, stroking his scrubby chin. "But the tide's powerful strong, d'yer see, an' it scoops up

the sand and pours it through the old barky's ribs much faster than we can pump it out."

"Then you never expect to reach the gold?" asked Jack sharply. "If it pours in faster than you can get it out, what's the good of going on?"

The diver shifted his feet uneasily:

"Well," he answered at last: "I don't quite know about *that*, sir; there might come a time when we could gain, you know."

"Yes, and in the meantime valuable time and money are being wasted," snapped Jack: "Well, look here, I should like to have a peep below myself. Just get your diving-dress, will you, and show me how to go to work."

"You ain't goi down, sir?" cried the astonished Bowyer: "It ain't safe; you'll go giddy, and—"

"I'll risk all that," retorted Jack quickly: "You won't be blamed, whatever happens."

In face of his determination the diver gave way, although reluctantly, and ere long the young man was arrayed in full diving-kit: The air-pump was manned, then he clambered down the ladder and lowered himself slowly into the water:

For a few moments after he reached the bottom he was afraid that he would have to relinquish the task: His head swam, there was a terrible roaring in his ears, and his breath came in gasps: But gradually he became accustomed to his novel position, and moved cautiously forward:

Presently he stood in the great cavity where the galleon's deck had broken across, surveying the dark interior of the hold: There was sand everywhere, and the lad's heart sank as he gazed at the gaping rents in the weed-hung timbers: So far as he could see, the task his father had set himself was an impossible one:

Leaving the wreck, Jack made his way beyond her, intent on discovering exactly how such a quantity of sand had reached the wreck, for to his knowledge the bottom of the bay was mostly naked rock, save where a sand-bar stretched across its entrance, lying in a sort of hollow in the ocean bed.

He made sundry discoveries, and then returned to the surface, for the pressure down below was getting irksome. Bowyer marveled loudly at the aptitude he had displayed, but Jack was in no mood for conversation; he was thinking hard:

"I want to go down again," he said:

"Get the air-pump put in the boat, will you, and row me out to the bar."

The diver grumbled again, but the young man insisted, and half-an-hour later he was once more exploring the bottom of the bay, this time on the inner side of the bar, where the shallow water fretted and fumed in the sunshine:

When he came up and his helmet had been removed Frank saw that his brother's eyes were dancing with excitement: He did not question him, however, knowing that Jack would explain everything in due course:

"You look a bit pale, Jack," observed Frank, as they strode off together towards home: "I expect that diving has upset you. Hullo! Who's this fellow coming along here?"

Looking up, Jack saw a stranger approaching along the rocky path: He was a man of middle-age, with a dark, sallow face of an unmistakably Semitic type, lit up by a pair of piercing, black eyes: He was dressed in a suit of rather loud tweeds, and flourished a gold-headed cane:

"Great Scott!" muttered the undergraduate: "Surely it's not Levinstein?"

Hardly had he given utterance to the thought than the stranger was abreast of him:

"Ha!" he said suddenly. "Mr. Alroy's sons, I presume? I am Mr. Levinstein, of Glasgow: Your father may have mentioned me to you."

"Yes, he has," answered Jack somewhat coldly:

"Good," remarked Levinstein, with a furtive glance at the undergraduate's impassive face: "Then you know all about me, of course: My little debt's due in a week or two, so I thought I'd combine business and pleasure by having a bit of a holiday: See?"

Jack inclined his head and made to pass on, but the stranger was not to be dismissed so easily:

"And so your father hasn't had much luck with that treasure-ship of his, hey?" he asked: "I never did have much faith in that: He's got the money for me all right, though, I hope?"

"I must refer you to my father, sir," said Jack shortly: "I believe the money is not due for another three weeks."

"Sixteen days exactly, young man," snapped the stranger: "On August 17th he cashes up, or else out he goes! You hear me? You can tell him that from me."

JACK SETS TO WORK.

THAT night, after the evening meal was over, and the laird had withdrawn to his study to smoke, the two brothers joined him:

"Father," said Jack gravely, "do you know that Levinstein has arrived on the island?"

"Levinstein here already!" gasped the old gentleman, his face paling. "How do you know?"

For answer the young man told him of their interview of the afternoon, and the moneylender's insulting message. Mr. Alroy bit his lip angrily; then a look of despair filled his face.

"The unmannerly brute!" he muttered. "I told you he would not spare me. He is right; in three weeks' time the estate will be his."

"I can't bear to think of it, father," Jack burst out. "Frank and I have been down to the wreck this afternoon, and I put on a diving-suit and went below. Father, that man Bowyer is no good; his one idea is to make his job last. He told me himself that more sand was flowing in than they could pump out. What's the good of going on like that?"

"I know there is something wrong," the old gentleman admitted helplessly. "But what can I do? I can't go down to the bottom myself and examine things. And yet I'm certain the treasure is there. No doubt Levinstein will be able to get it, if he cares to try."

"I'd sooner dynamite the ship than let him have it," growled Frank. "Can't you suggest anything, Jack?"

"I was just going to," replied his brother. "Look here, father, will you let me take the salvage work in hand? I discovered yesterday that the sand reaches the wreck along a sort of channel in the bed of the bay, starting near the bar. Each flood-tide sweeps it along up to the wreck, and when our men start pumping it filters through the gaps in the galleon's ribs. It simply means that they'll never get any further. Bowyer should have known all that, but as I've told you, he's no good."

"What is your plan, then?" asked the old gentleman eagerly.

"Simply this," answered Jack readily. "I should like to build a barrier of stout planking all round the wreck, so as to keep the sand out. Then I fancy the pump would soon clear away what is inside her and enable us to get at the treasure."

"It sounds plausible enough," said Mr. Alroy thoughtfully. "But it will take time, laddie, and that, alas, we haven't got! Is it any use putting the work in hand only to let Levinstein reap the advantage when the island is his?"

"The island shan't be his!" Jack cried passionately. "By hook or by crook we'll circumvent him yet. May I try, father?"

"Certainly, if you have any hope," replied the old man wearily. "Do what you like. But I'm afraid it's too late—too late!"

Very early the following morning the two undergraduates were astir, for there was not a moment to be lost if Jack's scheme was to be put into operation. As soon as the diver and the six islanders had arrived Jack called them together and briefly explained to them what he wanted done, telling them that his father had placed him in charge of the work. The natives heard him out with interest, nodding approval when he had finished, but Bowyer was ready with a hundred objections.

"If you can think of a better plan, we'll try it," Jack answered him. "Otherwise we'll start on the barrier at once. The method you've been trying lately is simply wasting time."

The diver muttered something under his breath, but said nothing further, and an hour later all hands were hard at work preparing timber for the barrier, the two Alroys working as strenuously as though their lives depended upon it.

More than a week went by, and day by day the barrier grew. Many trips to the bottom had made Jack quite an expert diver, and he was now doing as much of the necessary underwater drilling and fixing as Bowyer, who seemed to become daily more sullen and discontented.

Thoroughly tired out, but conscious of having accomplished a good day's work, the two lads were returning home one evening when they met Levinstein, attired in a flashy shooting jacket and knickers.

"We meet again," he observed, with an evil smile. "Did you give the old man my message? Time's getting short now."

Jack turned upon him furiously.

"Deliver your messages yourself, sir!" he flashed out.

"Oh, we're getting snappy, are we?" sneered the moneylender. "You seem to forget I've got the whip-hand of you, my young bantam. Three thousand golden quid your old man got out of me, and

don't you forget it! What I want to know is, am I going to get 'em back on the 17th? Failing that, my high and mighty gentleman, you'll get your marching orders, and pretty smart, too."

That night, while the two brothers were taking a stroll ere turning in, they passed the primitive little inn which formed Ardraig's only hostelry: Seated in the porch, in earnest conversation, were Bowyer the diver, and Mr. Levinstein: So engrossed were they that they did not notice the Alroys go by:

"Jack," said Frank, "did you see that? I don't like it: Levinstein will be putting that fellow up to some crooked work if he thinks there's any likelihood of us reaching the treasure in time."

Jack shook his head moodily:

"I don't think so," he answered: "Levinstein doesn't believe in the treasure, and Bowyer considers my plan unworkable: And between you and me, old chap—it breaks my heart to say it—I'm beginning to fear we shan't have time: Only five days more, Frank, and then the calamity!"

FOUL PLAY.

THE barrier was well-nigh finished, when one morning Jack Alroy came up from an under-water trip in a towering rage:

"Bowyer," he said, directly his helmet was off: "What have you been doing with that last row of planks? The bolts were not fixed; the pressure would have forced them out directly we started pumping."

Bowyer's fat face flushed dully:

"I—I thought they were tight enough," he growled: "An' anyway, what's the good of it? You can't never do nothing in the time; in another few days the wreck'll belong to Mr. Levinstein."

Jack started, and a steely glitter came into his eyes:

"Who told you that?" he cried: "Levinstein himself, I suppose? Now look here, my man; I've put up with your insolence long enough: Whoever the ship may belong to in a week's time, you are my father's servant at this moment, and you have disobeyed orders in not fixing those bolts. Get ashore, sir; I discharge you: Call at the house this evening and I'll pay you what's due to you."

The diver glared at him sullenly, his beady eyes dilating:

"Very good," he snarled at last: "I ain't sorry—I only 'ope you've got the money to pay me! When you've been kicked off the island Mr. Levinstein and I will set about gettin' the gold in the proper way."

Ere Jack could reply he had retreated to the boat, shipping the oars and pulling himself leisurely ashore: Jack then took the men into his confidence and explained why urgency was so necessary in their work:

There were murmurs of surprise, but when Jack asked if they would help him by doing their utmost there came a deep-throated chorus of acquiescence from the group, for the laird and his family were idolised by the simple islanders:

"Thank you, lads," said Jack brokenly: "You shall not lose, I promise you: And now let's get to work."

That afternoon the last plank of the barrier was fastened home, and with a feeling of exultation Jack Alroy gave the order to start the sand-pump: Soon a steady stream of sludge was pouring from its outlet pipes, while a careful examination under water showed that no more was leaking in through the timbering:

"This is great, Jack," cried Frank, slapping his brother on the back: "If only we have time! What a pity it is we can't work at night; we could keep going all the time."

"Yes, it is," said his brother sadly: "If we had the proper lights and so on we could, but as it is we must make the best of things: Isn't it maddening to think that a mere matter of hours may lose us the old home?"

When the tired men knocked off work at dusk the deposit of sand in the galleon's hull had been sensibly reduced, and Jack's heart beat high with hope: On his arrival home, however, he found the laird more depressed than ever:

"My trouble is all over the island, lads," he told them: "That brute Levinstein has been boasting down at the inn that the pauper Alroys would soon be gone, and that he would be master of the island in future. He told the landlord that it amused him to see you two working so hard at the galleon, because he would get the benefit of your work."

"I shall go down and horsewhip that

chap before I've finished!" said Jack. "When is this debt actually due, father?"

"At mid-day on Thursday," answered the laird sadly. "Three days—no, two days and a-half from now. Is there any hope?"

Jack sighed; the time was terribly short.

"I can't say, father," he said slowly. "We'll all do our best."

Sunrise next morning saw the two Alroys and their willing assistants hard at work again, with the pump steadily sending out its sandy stream. About mid-day Jack made a trip below to readjust the suction-pipe. Five minutes later he was on the lighter again, gesticulating wildly for his helmet to be removed.

"There's been foul play somewhere!" he cried, with flashing eyes. "Someone has drawn a lot of the bolts in the planking, and the sand has been pouring in again like a mill-race!"

For an instant dead silence followed this disconcerting news; then old Jock the foreman spoke.

"I believe that's some o' that there Bowyer's work," he said. "He's been mighty thick wi' the Jew feller since 'e got discharged. They mean to keep you from gettin' the gold in time, sir, mark my words."

"I believe you're right, Jock," cried Jack impulsively. "If I only had proof! Give me the tools; there's not a moment to lose."

In half-an-hour the damage was put right, and once more the sand began to lower inside the galleon's hull, while the two brothers discussed in angry tones this latest manifestation of the moneylender's villainy.

"He's 'cute," observed Frank. "He knows that if the debt isn't paid he gets not only the island but the treasure aboard the galleon. It's to his interest, confound him, that the debt isn't paid!"

"Yes," said Jack. "The cur! We'll keep watch ourselves to-night, Frank, I daren't take any more risks."

When the men were compelled to stop work by the growing gloom Jack sent a message to his father by Jock, then he and Frank settled themselves for a night's vigil.

It was a dark and moonless evening, with a faint grey mist stealing in from the Atlantic. Everything was very silent; only the lap-lap of the wavelets against the

barrier came to their ears as they sat side by side against the little tool-shed on the lighter's deck.

The hours passed slowly by, till Frank dropped off to sleep, and Jack found himself nodding, in spite of the chill night air. With a growl he rubbed his heavy eyes, shivering a little as the damp mist-wreaths swept over him.

Suddenly a new sound struck his ear—a curious creaking. In an instant he was on the alert, while he gently shook his brother's arm to awaken him.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank drowsily.

"Hush!" breathed Jack. "Listen! What's that noise?"

As he spoke the creaking sound came again—perceptibly nearer, and it seemed to him that he could detect a shapeless black mass moving through the darkness towards the dam.

"It's a boat," breathed Frank, rising to his knees. Nearer and nearer came the dark object, till with a jar it struck against the barrier. Then a murmur of voices came to the watchers' ears.

"The brutes!" hissed Frank, and leapt to his feet, a heavy iron bar in his hand. Ere Jack could restrain him he had dashed to the edge of the lighter.

"You there," he shouted through the mist. "What do you want? Answer before I fire on you."

There was a muffled exclamation, the sound of splashing, and the black mass in front began to move away. With an excited exclamation Frank raised his arm and hurled the iron bar with all his strength. A dull thud, a cry of pain, and the object was swallowed up by the fog.

"You've spoilt it," cried Jack. "We might have caught them in the act! It was Levinstein and Bowyer, I'll swear."

"Well, I've marked one of them, at any rate," panted Frank. "I'm sorry, Jack; my temper ran away with me. Still, we've taught them a lesson, the cowardly brutes."

THE COMING OF THE "ULYSSES."

FROM sunrise till dusk next day the sand-pump was hard at work, and hour by hour the oozy deposit inside the *Santa Teresa's* hull diminished. The two brothers were by this time so excited that they could hardly control themselves. Mr. Levinstein, they learnt, was becoming

daily more offensive in his references to the Alroy family, while Bowyer the diver was in bed, suffering from a mysterious injury to his head. The lads chuckled grimly at this news—it showed sufficiently the identity of their midnight visitors.

That night they watched once more on the lighter's deck, though it seemed unlikely that they would be molested.

"Twelve hours more, Frank," said Jack at midnight, as he consulted his watch by the light of a match. "I'm afraid we've lost the race."

"Don't say that, Jack," pleaded his brother. "Couldn't we kidnap the wretch, or something?"

"Out of the question," answered Frank with a sad smile. "This is the twentieth century, Frank, and the brute's got the law on his side."

Directly the sun peeped above the horizon, and long before the workmen arrived, Frank got the pump to work, while Jack donned the diving-suit and went below to adjust the suction-pipes. He returned to the surface after an absence of twenty minutes, only to descend again with a spade. When he ascended again he dived his hand into the big pocket on his chest. When he withdrew it Frank saw that he gripped a handful of dull yellow discs.

"Jupiter!" he yelled wildly. "Doubloons! Where did you get them, Jack? Hurrah!"

"I found them in the sand," answered his brother excitedly. "One of the chests must have broken, or rotted away, I suppose. Where these are, there must be others. Oh, Frank, we mustn't lose now!"

When the men arrived the news of the discovery was communicated to them, and one and all set to work with a will to clear away the sand.

At ten o'clock a score more doubloons were brought to the surface, and Jack positively shivered as he looked at his watch.

"I can't stand much more of this," he said. "Only two hours more, and the treasure hardly a foot away!"

"Hullo!" cried Frank suddenly. "There's a yacht coming up the bay. Where have I seen her before?"

With the exception of the weekly steamer the arrival of a vessel was a rare event at Ardraig, and Jack turned to look at the yacht with interest. She was a graceful craft, painted white, with a diminutive funnel amidships.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "It's the *Ulysses*—Sir William Stevenage's yacht. Don't you remember we went on board her at Cowes with Ted Stevenage? I wonder if he's on board?"

Ted Stevenage was a fellow-undergrad. at St. Anselm's, and his father was the great financier whose nod could set the Stock Exchange in a ferment.

"If he is on board——" began Frank; then an idea occurred to him.

"Jack," he cried, seizing his brother's arm. "If he is, we may do Levinstein yet! Where are those doubloons? Come with me."

He tumbled headlong into the boat, followed by his wondering brother. Ere Jack could ask a question the excited Frank had got out the oars and was pulling furiously in the direction of the yacht, which had just dropped her anchor.

Ten minutes later they were alongside, and a man on deck threw them a rope.

"Is this Sir William Stevenage's yacht?" began Frank. Then he caught sight of a youth in a flaring blazer coming along the deck.

"Hullo, Ted, old man!" he shouted joyously. "I was——"

"Hanged if it isn't the Alroys!" cried the youngster on deck. "The very chaps I wanted to see! Come up, both of you. The pater insisted on putting in here so as to thank you for saving my life."

Nimble the brothers scrambled up to the deck, where the trio shook hands heartily. Then Stevenage hurried to the companion-way.

"Pater," he called out lustily. "Come up, will you?"

In response to his hail a tall, white-haired gentleman in a yachting cap came leisurely up the stairs.

"Here, pater, are the very fellows you wanted to see," Stevenage burst out. "This is Frank Alroy, who fished me out, and this is Jack, who practised the artificial respiration business."

"I'm delighted to know you, young gentlemen," said Sir William heartily. "My letter expressed my thanks only too feebly, and I determined that I would not pass your home without expressing my gratitude in person. It was a noble act."

The two brothers heard him out, expressed their pleasure at being able to render a service, and then they looked at one another doubtfully.

At last Frank summoned up courage to speak.

"Sir William," he said. "We came out here to ask your assistance in an important matter: We are in great trouble."

The genial baronet's face grew sympathetic at once, and Frank's embarrassment vanished:

In eloquent words he told of the state of affairs at Ardcreig, of Levinstein's insolence and their own efforts to circumvent him: Then Jack produced the handful of doubloons:

Ten minutes later the two boys were rowing shorewards with joy in their hearts. In Jack's breast-pocket reposed Sir William Stevenage's cheque for the exact amount of Mr. Levinstein's debt, with interest at five per cent.

Twelve o'clock boomed out from the stable-clock at Alroy House, and hardly had the last clanging sound died away than a figure clothed in garish tweeds swaggered up to the front door and knocked loudly. The old housekeeper opened it:

"My name is Levinstein," said the stranger loudly: "I want to see your master."

Without a word the old lady showed him into the study, where he beheld Mr. Alroy sitting at the table, with Jack and Frank standing close by.

"I've come for my money, Mr. Alroy," said Levinstein, throwing his hat on the table: "Is it ready? I've got the papers here!"

The old gentleman cleared his throat nervously, looking at the moneylender meanwhile with a curious expression on his thin face.

"As you know," he began: "I have not yet reached the treasure, and——"

"I can't help that," interrupted Levinstein brutally. "I daresay I shall be able to, if you can't: My money's due to-day, and I want it—every penny of it—or out you go!"

"I will not prolong this painful interview," cried the laird angrily. "There is your money, sir; kindly write me a receipt in full discharge."

He pushed the cheque across the table, and with a look of wonderment the moneylender grabbed it up, gazing open-mouthed at the bold signature:

"William Stevenage!" he gasped, his sallow face turning a dull red: "The dickens! You can think yourself lucky, Mr. Alroy: You've beaten me on the post!"

He dropped heavily into a chair, pulled the pen and ink towards him, and slowly and reluctantly wrote out, signed, and stamped the receipt:

Then he rose to his feet and picked up his hat:

"You're lucky," he said again: "I thought I'd got those doubloons for a certainty! You can smile, you young cubs——"

"Will you go, sir?" asked Mr. Alroy, reaching towards the bell. "Or——"

"Or will you be thrown out?" demanded Jack, advancing menacingly:

The discomfited Levinstein chose to go of his own accord: He left the island by the steamer calling next day, and half Ardcreig went down to the wharf to hoot him and the battered Bowyer, who traveled by the same boat:

A fortnight later the golden hoard which had lain so long in the *Santa Teresa's* hold was successfully salvaged, and when the Government had taken its tithe and Sir William Stevenage's providential loan had been paid off, enough remained to put the ancient house of Alroy out of the reach of such vicissitudes as had so nearly lost the heritage, and which culminated in such dramatic fashion in the "Saving of Ardcreig."

* * * GENTLE MILDRED. * *

*Fair Mildred has a tender heart;
It makes her sad to see
Bad boys espy the birdie's nest
And tear it from the tree;
Yet, while she sorrows for the bird
The solemn truth is that
She always has a wing or two
Affixed unto her hat.*

*Fair Mildred has a tender heart;
She says the butcher who
Would slay a little calfie must
Be crued through and through;
Yet, while she chides the butcher and
Abhors his cruel steel,
Sweet Mildred, tender past compare
Is very fond of veal.*

THE CONVENTIONAL ENDING.

By A. DEMAINE GRANGE.

In the May issue a story appeared under the above heading. The author's ending was omitted, and readers were invited to submit endings, £1 is being offered to the sender of the best one received. In point of excellence there was so little to choose between the three attempts published below that the prize was increased to 30s. and divided equally between the three senders.

The Plot of the Story. JACK RALSTON and Queenie Neville, a chorus girl, are in love. Jack's father forbids a marriage, and the two separate with many heartburnings.

In a few years Queenie becomes a beautiful and famous actress, but she is still true to her first love. The manager of a New York theatre wishes her to create the leading part in a new play, *The Garden of Eden*.

The *dénouement* is that the man returns to find the girl he had known in his struggling days transformed into a rich and beautiful woman with the world at her feet. They meet, and she receives him kindly. But the years have made a difference, and he cannot ask now for what he once threw away.

Queenie recognises in the play the life story of herself and Jack up to a certain point, but she thinks the ending should have been a happy one.

On the night the play is produced the author is in a box. Queenie sees it is her former lover, and in the final scene almost breaks down. Jack comes to the footlights to receive his meed of applause as author, then the curtain is rung down.

The Author's Ending. "JACK!" she whispered. He took her hand silently. "Are you satisfied?" she asked.

"Perfectly," he said. "And you—" "I think the piece went splendidly. But—" she paused, and then added: "The last scene was too real."

"Too real!" he echoed. "Don't you think it would have been better to have given it the conventional ending, Jack?" The blue eyes dropped suddenly.

He drew closer to her and his voice was very gentle. "Ah, girlie, I couldn't do that."

"No?" "I'll tell you why." He turned to a tall, handsome woman, who was standing near, and laid his hand on her arm. "This, Minnie," he said, "is my old friend, Miss Neville." Then, turning to Queenie, he added: "My wife!"

Minnie Ralston held out her hand. "I think the last act was the best of all," she said.

Prize Ending. NEXT day he stood before her with eager, hungry eyes.

"Why have you come?" she asked trembling.

"I had to. I've waited so long."

"You waited too long!" she said gravely.

"Love got cold and shivered to death."

He caught her unwilling hands.

"I will warm him into life," he said, "only remember the Eden we walked together."

"Paradise is lost."

"Paradise may be regained," he answered quickly; "only forgive me, Queenie." He saw now what the loneliness of years had meant for her.

"Pride wouldn't let me climb after you," he excused himself. "I could only meet you at the top."

"Ah, pride," she moaned; "first your father's, then yours. There can be no conventional

ending' to a love built on pride; you write truer than you speak."

"And you act truer than you speak," he retorted. "You failed last night because your heart spoke louder than your voice. It made me hope. Let your heart speak now, love."

Her eyes floated large in tears of pity. Through them she saw his thin, lined face; he had suffered too. "Jack, boy," she whispered.

"Girlie!"
[S. C. NETHERSOLE, 10, Park Street, Dover.]

Prize Ending. THE curtain fell. Queenie turned and moved wearily towards the wings.

Ralston followed. "Girlie," he said, "I wrote it for you. I have never forgotten. All these years I have watched and longed for you, trying to write something worthy to place me again on the same footing as in the old days, and at last, darling, I stand with you on the pinnacle called Success. D'you care, Queenie?" She turned to Ralston, her face in shadow.

"Is this true?" she asked. "I swear it; and oh, I care so very much! This time I ask you like an honest man, will you be my wife?"

She was silent, and he came quite close to her and gazed into her shadowed face. She looked fearlessly at him for a moment, and he could just see that her eyes were full of tears.

"Darling, tell me you care?" She placed her hand on his shoulder and laid her wet cheek against his face.

"I have always cared," she whispered, and the third act ended as it had begun, in the Garden of Eden.
[H. C. KING-STEPHENS, "Salehurst," Teddington.]

Prize Ending. SHE turned towards him with outstretched hands: "Jack!" she cried.

"I want to congratulate you, Miss Neville, and to thank you for your splendid success. You've made my play."

By a resolute effort Queenie summoned pride to her aid. If she had broken down in the play she would not break down now.

For some time they talked commonplaces; then he rose to go. His gaze rested lingeringly on her sweet face, her dark eyes, and red-gold hair, as if to imprint it upon his memory.

"Good-bye," he said, "I may not see you again, as I'm off to England immediately."

"Good-bye," she replied.

He loved her more than ever, but he had a quixotic notion of honour and unyielding pride. Five years ago, when she was poor, he had deserted her. Should he seek her now that she was rich?

He set his teeth hard to keep in the words he longed to speak. And the girl's heart was aching for the words that never came.

The next night Queenie Neville was a great success. She did not break down again in the last scene. She had had an extra rehearsal.

[Will the sender of this attempt please forward name and address?—EDITOR.]

The Outpost.

A tale of the Franco-German War, relating the results of an act of humanity.

FOR the time the enemy had retreated, and we occupied the captured position.

The sergeant had gone away, disappearing over the crest of the hill, leaving the conscript Claude Latapie as outpost upon a small eminence, where he was sheltered by the broken walls of a shot-shattered cottage.

Night was drawing on. In the fast-darkening twilight the surrounding objects threw strange, eerie shadows, and the young soldier's heart sank within him at finding himself all alone in the midst of this dreary Winter scene. His superstitious peasant's mind imagined in these forms the weird spectres concerning which so many wonderful tales beguiled the long evenings in the countryside.

The sky was dark, the clouds gathered more and more thickly. Scarcely a star was to be seen, and the wind howled with shrill mournfulness in the bare branches. The sentinel's mind grew heavy and dull as his body grew chill and torpid in the deathly frost. Soon his thoughts wandered no longer back to the dear old hearth at home; he even lost consciousness of the weighty responsibility that was his.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a groan, proceeding apparently from a spot close by. Startled by the sound, Claude shook off his oppression, grasped his weapon more firmly, and, with ear alert, peered anxiously through the gloom. He bethought himself of his comrades, sleeping under his protection; he remembered that their safety depended upon him, and reproached himself for his weakness.

The cry was repeated. Clearly it came from the interior of the ruined cottage. Claude entered by the open door, struck a match, and beheld, lying in a corner, amid the debris of the fallen roof, a human form. He lit a candle, which he found upon the floor, and cautiously approached the injured man.

By the flickering light of his taper he saw that it was one of the enemy, who had been struck down by a beam, which lay

across his chest. Claude, obeying his first impulse, brandished his bayonet menacingly, but the poor fellow's wild, imploring look shamed him. This was a foe indeed, but a wounded one.

The sentinel lowered his gun, and its butt-end clashed upon the frozen ground.

"He will die anyhow, if he is left there!" muttered Claude to himself.

A choked voice intreated: "Drink!"

"Drink?" The soldier's hand felt for his flask, still half warm with the coffee with which he had filled it before leaving for his post—a double ration of coffee, fortified by a strong infusion of brandy. What! Should the precious liquid serve to warm an enemy's carcase at the expense of a Frenchman's?

He uncorked the flask and put it to his own lips, with an insulting parade of intense enjoyment. But the first mouthful choked him. After all, this German was a man!

Claude propped his gun against the wall, and, bending over the wounded man, removed the beam which was crushing him. Then he knelt at the German's side, and held the flask to his lips. The other stretched out his hands to take it into his own grasp.

"None of that!" said Claude. "Hands off! or none of this do you get. To think that I shall be obliged to suck the place soiled by the lips of this beer-drinker!"

The injured man understood these words, for he was familiar with French, having lived in France before the war broke out. Upon hearing Claude's expression of disgust, he turned aside his head for a moment, but his terrible thirst speedily mastered every other feeling. He opened his mouth, into which the sentinel slowly and gently poured the lukewarm coffee. Then Claude rose to his feet and went out to resume his watch.

At the end of half-an-hour, either to look after the suffering stranger or to shelter himself for a moment from the icy blast, Claude re-entered the cottage.

Still tortured by fever, the German soldier held out his hands for the flask.

Again Claude had pity on him. Forgetting entirely his first repugnance, and anxious to return to his duty, he unfastened the strap to which the flask was attached, and gave it into the man's hands.

This done, he left the cottage. And lo ! before him stood four armed men, while another fell upon him and disarmed him before he could give the alarm.

A large number of soldiers were advancing, with footsteps muffled by the snow. The company halted. Its commander, a Bavarian captain, ordered the prisoner to be taken into the ruined house.

There the captain questioned Claude in French. He could get nothing out of him.

"I shall find the way to loose your tongue," threatened the captain ; "we shall see what these bayonets can do ! Where are your posts, your main body, your encampment ?"

Still the soldier kept silence.

"Hollo, you others !" commanded the captain ; "spike this obstinate fellow for me !"

A feeble voice cried : "Stop !"

Looking round in surprise, the officer saw the wounded German, and recognised him as a soldier of his own company, who had been left for dead. From his lips he learnt how compassionate the prisoner had been to him.

"Very well, then," said the captain ; "I will spare him for the present ; but should he make the least sign, he shall be instantly slain. He must go with us. Muller and Hermann, guard him between you. At the first word, force his voice into his throat. Let us be off. No fear but that we shall soon discover for ourselves both outpost and camp."

Claude was in the depths of despair. He had deserted his post ; he had failed to give the alarm ; and the consequence was that his comrades would be surprised and massacred. How now could they be warned and saved ?

He marched quietly with the others, rejoicing at first because the reconnoitring party went in the wrong direction. But the captain observed his look of satisfaction, and changed the route.

This time he took the right road, leading directly to the camp. All was lost !

Suddenly Claude tripped and fell. As his guards stooped to raise him his fingers twined themselves around Muller's gun.

Muller tried to wrest it from his grasp. Claude resisted. He had already managed to cock it, in spite of the pain caused by his fall, and he was trying now to get at the

trigger. Before he could do so, Hermann made a thrust at him with his bayonet. Not until he was mortally wounded did his nerveless fingers relax their hold. In the struggle the gun went off at last. Loudly the report rang out upon the stillness of the night, and Claude, gathering into one last effort all his expiring strength, shouted : "To arms !"

Then he fell, staining the snow with his blood. But the report and his cry had been heard.

The soldiers of two stations rushed to the spot, one party attacking the Germans in front and the other harassing them in the rear. The main body hastened to their aid, and soon the enemy, hemmed in on every side, was forced to surrender.

* * * * *

Standing beside the ambulance, where Claude lay in his death agony, the commander of the corps, who had heard the story of his devotion, wished to bestow upon him that reward of the brave, the Cross of the Legion of Honour. But the dying youth, with an almost horrified gesture, objected.

"No, no ! If you only knew——"

"I know you to be a gallant fellow," said the General.

"Ah ! Must I then confess my dishonour before I die ? I deserve the court-martial rather than the cross !"

With sobs of penitence and shame he confessed the momentary relaxation of his watch.

"To think that through my fault all might have been lost ! But the anguish of that poor wretch of a Prussian wrung my heart."

"His comrades have recompensed you finely !"

"That is nothing," replied Claude simply. "I had been warned, and knew what to expect. I preferred to have their bayonets in my body to knowing that they would cut down my sleeping friends who trusted to me. I am happy indeed, my General, to die for France, when I deserve execution !"

"Give me your hand, my brave boy ! You have nobly redeemed your little dereliction. I am proud to command men such as you !"

The General bent over Claude, and laid the cross upon his breast. The face of the dying youth brightened wonderfully. Laying his feverish hand upon the cross, he murmured :

"My mother will be pleased with this. You will send it her, will you not, my General ?"

The General promised. The young soldier smiled and died.

Books in Brief. * * *

The gist of a novel in the form of a short story—this is our idea of a popular review. Our selection this month comprises: (1) "Ring in the New," by Richard Whiteing, author of "No. 5 John Street," and other books dealing with social problems; and (2) "The Angel of Pain," by E. F. Benson, whose first novel, "Dodo," made such a sensation.

RING IN THE NEW. * * *

By RICHARD WHITEING.

(Hutchinson & Co. 6s.)

PRUDENCE MERYON—Prue, for short—stood a beggar in the world at twenty years of age, with little more than as many pounds between her and the deeps. She was staying at the house of a cousin in London. "How am I to get to Girton with a sum like that?" she asked.

"It looks as if you would have to take your coat off, and get a job at a pound a week," said one of her cousins.

"Stumped at the start," said Prue; and the tears came.

"Why don't you go and see Aunt Edom?"

"I have not come down to that," said Prue petulantly. And, as might have been expected, she went to see her aunt next day.

Aunt Edom was the head of the family. Girton lost its chance of Prue's going there, and she went to live with Aunt Edom as reader and companion. She stood it for a time, and then declared she would "do something on her own," greatly to Aunt Edom's surprise. She left Aunt Edom, and went into lodgings in town; and then the old, weary struggle began of a girl trying to make a living in stony-hearted London without having any special qualifications for the task.

II.

AFTER many vicissitudes, Prue one day came across a journal called *The Branding Iron*—a paper of the back streets, edited by George Leonard, the price of which was "Love—or a ha'penny." "What stuff!" she said—and then she took it up.

The prospectus set forth that *The Branding Iron* was a new journal of society—in the back streets. It proposed to do for the back streets exactly what its rivals did for the other parts of the planet. Sarah Ruskil, the lady who "did" Prue's room, was an admirer of the journal, and its editor,

and he, true to his theory of waiving all social distinctions, was on very friendly terms with his literary "charwoman."

One day, Prue received an invitation from Sarah couched in the following terms:

Miss Ruskil will be glad to have the pleasure of Miss Meryon's company at tea this evenin' at 'arf after five. No anser required, but please come. Fare tuppence by the yellow tram from Grazin' Road, stopping at the Bull and Gate, and then two minet's walk. Company.

Prue went, and met there George Leonard.

Leonard was not a day older than five-and-twenty and had the average good looks of his age. He was of middle height, had dark hair that curled with its own wiry strength, was clean shaven, and very neatly dressed.

Prue had to say something civil to him, although she did not quite know how to begin. "Your paper is very original."

"Wait," he returned quietly, and more to himself than to her.

"It is very good of you to give us so much of your time."

"Unfortunate for me that I can only give so little. But I have other things to attend to in other quarters, worse luck."

And then the party broke up, the remorseless Sarah pressing her oranges on them to the last.

III.

PRUE at length—his failures were many and various—succeeded in getting something to do. She had to sit in a shop front cleared so as to exhibit just herself. In that crystal cell she manipulated a minor invention before the passing crowd. This contrivance was the very one with which Leonard produced his miniature paper *The Branding Iron*. She lived in a glare of publicity. Then the invention failed and she was again cast on her own resources.

The faithful Sarah came to see Prue and pressed a sovereign into her hand.

"It's very good of you," said Prue hesitatingly.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Sarah fiercely. "I want you to borrow it of me. Six per cent. per annum."

Prue took it in her need.

The pawnshop was the next stage. Her trinkets disappeared one by one. Then she saw the newspaper advertisements for hidden fifty pound notes, and, in her despair, went hunting with the other maniacs who hoped to find large sums of money. One night she prowled round Pentonville Graveyard in search of the hidden treasure, and found nothing. Then she started, for Leonard was beside her. "Go home and go to bed," he said. "What is a child like you doing here?"

Her veil was down, and he, apparently, did not recognise her. "I don't ask you who you are or where you live. But won't you let me take you so far on your way home as to get you out of this? It's not a fit place for you at this time of night."

She breathed freely again. When they stopped at the corner of a street which was but one turning from her own, "Good-night" she said, "and thank you a thousand times, and—if you think of me again—please don't mind."

IV.

On the brink of destitution, Prue, although suffering inwardly, was apparently quite calm. And one day, to relieve her suffering, there fell, as it were, out of the blue, a note in these terms:

The Hon. Mrs. Babyington Dart wishes to have the assistance of a shorthand writer and general amanuensis capable of performing secretarial duties. The name of Miss Meryon has been mentioned to her as one qualified for the post by a person whose recommendation would be quite sufficient, and who desires to remain anonymous. Should Miss Meryon be disengaged, will she be so good as to call on Mrs. Dart between ten and eleven to-morrow morning at No.—, Charles Street, Berkeley Square, or to write to that address by return, in case she cannot keep the appointment?

And so Prue sailed right out of the storm into the smooth water, and got the appointment. She did not know that Leonard had found the post for her with an old friend of his own. Mrs. Dart's work was light and easy, and left abundant leisure for other employment of the kind which Prue found through a friendly recommendation at the shorthand school.

Through Sarah's intervention, she was constantly meeting Leonard at various

social clubs for the poor. One day he asked her to make an appointment with him next Saturday in the vestibule of the National Gallery at two, and she agreed. And that was the beginning of things

V.

SARAH married, although she had fiercely protested that she never would. Then came a tragedy, for her husband, "Mr. Barker," was arrested on a charge of bigamy, and faded away out of her life. In healing Sarah's wounds, Prue forgot the hardships of her lot, until one night Leonard came to see her at Sarah's. He was waving a batch of telegrams in his hand. They contained the first news of the General Election and of the Great Surprise that Labour had come to stay.

When Sarah had gone out, Leonard explained the mystery of his own identity. "I," he said, "am a poor man's son, especially a poor woman's—a Board School boy at the start. I won my way to Oxford. When I came away, I went into journalism. It was not exactly the journalism of *The Branding Iron*, but of the great dailies. I'm the 'George Malby' of the reviews. I might have gone on as 'George Malby' for ever, but what I longed to do when I left the University was to benefit the class from which I had sprung. I have done so. Now, secret for secret?"

"You've done so much for me," said Prue. "You've carried me as far as I can go."

"Won't you understand? From the day of our first real meeting, you were first in my thoughts."

"Look here," she cried passionately. "I began my wretched little life with no other idea in it than to have a good time. I loathed poverty, I almost loathed poor people. Then came you to give me a sense of pity for that huge mass of mankind who are left out of the reckoning, and for whom something must be done."

"You said just now I had given you something. How am I to live, or work, or even understand without you?"

"Just as the others of your party do. They have left out the women, and think of their triumph to-day."

"And of their failure to-morrow, if they don't bring you in. How are we to ring in the new, without your finer intuitions of pity and of love? I love you. Tell me that you love me. Won't you go in and give Sarah the good news?"

And she went.

THE ANGEL OF PAIN.

By E. F. BENSON.

(Heinemann. 6s.)

I.

PHILIP HOME was a prosperous City man who was still a bachelor. He had a charming old mother who worshiped him. Philip was dark and long-limbed, and not quite thirty. His two great friends were Tom Merwall ("The Hermit") and Evelyn Dundas, the artist. They were coming to stay with him at his country place, and Lady Ellington and her daughter Madge were also expected. "You will have someone to flirt with when Dundas comes," Philip said to his mother.

"Dear, you say such dreadful things," said Mrs. Home. "Get him to paint Madge's portrait."

"That's an idea," said Philip. "He could paint her divinely. Do you know, I'm rather uneasy about Evelyn."

"Why?"

"The moment he gets a couple of hundred pounds he buys a motor-car or something, and next week his watch is in pawn. Now, when you are twenty-five, it is time to stop doing that."

The little party was expected to stay with Philip for a week at Whitsuntide. Lady Ellington was hard and clean-cut and glittering. If she could marry her daughter to Philip, she felt that her struggles this side of the grave would be over.

II.

MADGE ELLINGTON was twenty-five, and had never been in love. It was not in Lady Ellington's nature to be enthusiastic, since she considered enthusiasm to be as great a waste of the emotional fibres as anger, but she was, at least, thoroughly satisfied when, two evenings after their arrival at Pangbourne, Madge came to her room before dinner from a punting expedition with Philip and gave her news.

"It is quite charming," said her mother, "and you have shown great good sense. Dear child, I must kiss you."

There was no reason why the engagement should not be announced at once, and, in consequence, congratulations descended within a half hour. Evelyn Dundas alone felt somewhat pulled up, for he had been strongly attracted by Madge.

Madge went to sit to Evelyn Dundas for her portrait after her return to town. And

one day when Evelyn looked at the laughing face on his canvas, even as his eyes loved the work of his hands, so he knew in a burning flash of self-revelation that his soul loved Madge.

III.

LADY ELLINGTON and Madge had come down to spend the day with "The Hermit" at his cottage in the New Forest, for Lady Ellington had heard wonders about his power over birds and animals, and was anxious to put him to the test. Madge, feeling conscious that Evelyn was beginning to exercise a strange attraction over her—an attraction which conflicted strongly with her duty to Philip—was dull and pre-occupied. When "The Hermit" and her mother went out, she stayed in the cottage. She did not know that Evelyn had sent a telegram to "The Hermit" that he was coming to see him, and turned white at the sound of his step. There was an approaching thunderstorm; and she was afraid of storms. At the sight of the lightning flashes, her wits nearly deserted her. Then Evelyn asked her why she had refused to give him any more sittings for the portrait.

"I beg of you not to question me," she cried. "It is not fair on me that you use the accident of finding me alone here in this way. I must remind you that I am an unprotected girl, and you, I must remind you, are a gentleman."

But the moment had come. All the force that had been gathering up was unable to contain itself in him any longer. "I know all that," he said quietly; "but I can't help myself. It is not for the picture—that doesn't matter. It is for me—because I love you."

"You must go away at once or I," she said. "We can't sit in the same room."

"But you don't hate me for what I have said?"

"Hate you!" she said. "No, no, I—no, you must not think I hate you."

The door opened, and Lady Ellington entered, followed by "The Hermit."

IV.

PHILIP came down to Pangbourne Court to see his mother. Misery sat in his face, misery and a hardness as of iron, for "The Angel of Pain" had smitten him. Mother

and son looked at each other long without speaking:

"Philip, what is it?" she said. "Madge, is she dead?"

"No, she is not dead. I wish she were. She has betrayed me and thrown me over. She is probably by this time married to Evelyn Dundas."

He paused a moment. "And now to you, mother, I curse them both. I met them together yesterday. I cursed them to their faces. There is nothing I will not do that can damage them in any way."

"Ah, dear Philip, unsay that. It is impossible that you should feel that."

"I don't unsay it: In proportion as both of them were dear to me, so is that which has happened detestable to me."

That night, when his mother asked him to come back to read prayers, Philip refused. Then he bent and kissed her. "I am not sorry for myself," he said; "but I am sorry for you, dear mother, that you cannot possibly help me. Good night."

V.

It was at Lady Dover's, in Scotland, that "The Angel of Pain" visited Evelyn and Madge some time after their marriage. As Madge went out one day to join the shooters, she saw a man running towards her, and recognised him as Mr. Osborne, a well-known painter.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Dundas," he said; "don't go—don't go!"

His panting breath made him pause a moment, but he looked at her face of agony and apprehension, and, clenching his hands, went on: "No, not killed; there is nobody dead. But there has been an accident—a ricochet off one of those rocks. Someone has been—yes, my poor dear lady, it is your husband. But, don't go; it is terrible."

But before he could say more to stop her, she had passed him, and was running up the hill.

VI.

"THE HERMIT" had died suddenly. The one thing he had not learnt in his peaceful existence, the one thing he had shut out from him, was the presence of pain; and he was made to realise it, for, as he slept in his hammock, he had been leapt upon and trampled to death by a wild goat. Philip, who had been staying with him, broke down and wept when telling his mother. "And so," he said, "my lesson came home to me: A month ago I said 'I will hate, I will injure.' But now, when poor Tom, who

was all-kind and all-gentle, had to be taught like that, by those battering hoofs, that pain must be, and that one must accept it and sorrow, and not leave them out, now I say: 'Can I help? May I not bear a little of it?'"

He got up: "I have been in outer darkness. I have been black and bitter all these weeks, and all my life was hard. And now I am sorry."

Mrs. Home said nothing for the moment. "You have not heard, then?" she asked presently.

"I have heard nothing."

"It was in this evening's paper. Evelyn was shot in the face yesterday. They think he will live, but they know he will be blind."

VII.

PHILIP had at once written to Evelyn and Madge to stay with him and his mother. Madge had suffered terribly, for it was necessary to pretend to Evelyn that he had not been disfigured by the wound; but his face was so horrible that it was a constant strain to keep the fact from him. And as she came into the house one evening with Philip, she did not know that Evelyn was lying there behind the curtains. "Evelyn not here?" she said. "I suppose he's gone to the library for tea."

"How has he been to-day?"

"Ah, so bad, poor darling. And I dread his suspecting more. I so often see him feeling his face as if trying to picture it to himself more clearly. And if for a moment I should break down and let him know—ah, I can't talk of it." Her voice choked.

Evelyn felt as if something had snapped in his brain. When they had gone, he got up, went out, crossed the gravel of the terrace, and so on down to the river. All the sluices were raised and tons of water plunged through the openings. He raised his arms, spreading them out to the night, his foot slipped on the wet planks, and he fell into the roaring, rushing pool below. So the great Mother took him back to herself.

* * * * *

It was just a year later, a warm, mellow afternoon of mid-October, and Mrs. Home and Madge were walking on the terrace at Pangbourne. The sun, which was near to its setting, dazzled Madge a little, and she put up her hand to shade her eyes.

"Ah, that is Philip coming up the path," she said. "Shall we go to meet him?"

"You go, dear," said Mrs. Home. "I will wait for you here."

The Island of Infinite Calm.

✻ ✻ By GERTRUDE ELIZABETH MEERES.

How the peace of the Island was broken, and how it was restored again.

FAR away, clasped in the loving arms of the Caribbean Sea, lies a little coral island of surpassing beauty, and the people call it the Island of Infinite Calm.

Here and there tall palm trees fringe the white, sandy shore, and inland there is a great wealth of flowers.

It was the month of March, and the orange-trees were in full bloom, scenting the evening air, and attracting a cloud of nocturnal insects.

The Man in the Moon looked down, and there was a humorous little twinkle in his eye. What could have brought such a very roguish look to that bland, round face? Just an ordinary pair of lovers, wandering through an ordinary orange-grove!

They certainly were ridiculously happy as they strolled along with the sweet, white blossoms of the orange-trees almost brushing their hair, but then, you see, they had only been engaged for one short hour, and it was all most marvelously strange and new and wonderful!

A year ago she had been a shy little maiden just out of school, and he a bashful youth fleeing from the society of "women-folk," as he called them then, and blushing and stammering when left alone by chance in their presence. Yet to-night that same shy little maiden was lifting a pair of red lips, red as the flaunting hibiscus blossom she wore in her belt, to those of her lover, and he in reverence was bending to meet them, and his arms trembled strangely as he clasped the girl to himself. The little orange-blossoms turned their faces another way, and the big moths flitted into the shadows, and the Man in the Moon hastily hid behind the first little cloud he could catch, for he is a man of very delicate feelings, and felt that he was *de trop* just then.

The Boy murmured soft, endearing words, but his voice was low, and trembled and broke; but the Maiden understood, and softly caressed the cheek so near to hers, and there was silence.

On the porch of the bungalow sat Aunt Clorinda, and as she sat and rocked in the moonlight her heart was very full.

Unselfish joy was there, for who could do other than rejoice with the happiness of the "children," as she still called them? But there was also an ache which would not be stilled for the empty days before her, and the loneliness of old age.

The manly way in which Dick had asked her for her little Maisie had drawn out the old lady's heart, and she had given a conditional consent to their wedding "some day"! Nothing was to be considered settled until a year had passed.

"You are such children, you know," Aunt Clorinda had said.

So together, hand in hand, they had passed out into the garden, and Aunt Clorinda's eyes grew dim with tears, and her lips quivered, and her heart ached again as her thoughts traveled back over the years to another love-scene which had been played in that same garden, when she, a blithesome girl, had been wooed and loved. Death had ended her romance many a long year ago, but it all came back to her very vividly that night.

The chilly dampness of the evening air recalled the old lady to the present, and she shivered as she drew her fleecy shawl closer round her shoulders.

"Dinah!" she called. "Go and bring the children in. The night-dew is falling."

A buxom, chocolate-coloured woman answered her bidding. A cheerful old body was Dinah, and devoted to Aunt Clorinda.

"Eh! Eh!" she ejaculated. "Dew fallin' fer true!"—then, running her hand along the top of the verandah railings, and feeling the heavy moisture, she continued: "Gracious Piece! dem two chilluns must be want ter get de fever!"—and, still muttering to herself, she disappeared in the direction of the orange-grove.

It was only a few weeks after this, that trouble to Maisie and Dick came looming over the horizon, and bore down to the

Island of Infinite Calm: When the flagman at the old Spanish fort overlooking the harbour, ran up the flag that signaled the fact that a man-of-war was coming into the harbour, he little knew what the result would be to the lovers; but the Man in the Moon, who ought to have been attending to the people on the opposite side of the world at that time of day, foresaw quite plainly that there was trouble ahead.

By noon on that same bright day, the calm of the whole island was disturbed by the arrival of the man-of-war. The place was invaded by the gay and dashing officers, and the blue-jackets from H.M.S. *Courageous* filled the streets and wharf.

In honour of the "Boat" many social functions were prepared among the hospitable Colonists in this far-off isle. There were dances and tennis-parties, luncheons and teas, not to forget the moonlight sailing-parties, and dinners *al fresco*, where "chowder" was cooked, and clams baked in their shells, and all the other dainties of the island prepared.

Naturally the girls of the island were very much flattered and spoilt by the attentions they received from the gay and jolly Men of the Sea; but the young men of the island were very sore and sulky—they did not at all appreciate the way their noses were put out of joint; but, after all, what girl looks at a mere civilian when a naval man is near!

As for Maisie, her little head was fairly turned, and she flung herself heart and soul into all the gaiety and fun, for said she: "They will be gone again in a few days, and although everyone knows that they are terrible flirts and pay the most outrageous compliments, yet no one takes them seriously and it is an awful joke while it lasts!"

But her Boy-Lover did not understand.

About a week after the arrival of the man-of-war, a grand ball was given at Government House in their honour.

There was a big "At Home" on board the ship on the afternoon of the day, and all the world and his wife were there. Maisie looked especially sweet in her fresh muslin dress, with a big, shady hat, and a knot of pink roses at her waist. She was very happy and enjoyed herself immensely. The officers were so merry and gay, and they sang such funny songs and said such outrageous things that the merriment infected everyone and the fun was fast and furious.

The girls were shown all over the ship. They gazed at their reflections in the highly-

polished brass work, peeped down the long bores of the guns, and watched the blue-jackets having their tea. Maisie was flushed with excitement, and her eyes sparkled so that the soft little curls blew round her face to peep into them and wonder at their brilliance.

It was no wonder that all the men wanted to make her promise them certain dances for the coming ball.

"May I have the first?"

"Do spare me the fifth and tenth!"

"Promise me the eighth and ninth!"

And she found that her programme was being rapidly filled by the clamorous middies and officers.

"But I cannot give them all!" she cried, as the thought of Dick flashed across her mind.

"Why not?" they said. "Why not? You needn't keep any for the islanders, you can dance with them all the rest of your life, but we can only dance with you to-night! Be kind to us! We shall be going soon!"

And so it came to pass that when Maisie stepped into the smart little launch which took the guests ashore, she did so with a full programme. Every dance had been taken, not one was left.

Dick met her at the wharf. He was suffering terrible pangs of jealousy, but had determined to act like a man, and not to show it.

"I wanted to know how many dances you are going to spare me to-night," he said cheerfully, as they turned homewards.

"I'm awfully sorry," she said guiltily, "but do you know, Dick, I've given them all away already! But I tell you what I will do, I'll—" but her voice trailed away, for Dick had become very white, and without another word he turned on his heel and left her.

"What a temper he has!" she said to herself, "and I was just going to tell him that I would cross out that silly little middy with the big nose, and perhaps one of the first-lieutenants, but now, of course, I can't help it, and it isn't my fault!"

She repeated the last sentence over to herself several times. She did this because she knew perfectly well all the time that it was her fault. All girls do this.

The dance was in full swing. The haunting air of the Blue Danube Valse struck Dick's ear as he passed on his way to the club. He did not feel inclined to go anywhere, but anything was better than the solitude of his thoughts.

The club was well filled in spite of the dance. There was more than one young man there that evening "Not wanted" at the dance!

Dick settled down to a game of cards when in rushed young Benson in a state of great excitement.

"Hullo! I say! Such a go! The *Courageous* has been ordered off immediately. Cable from the Admiral! Some trouble in Jamaica! And there's not an officer left at the ball!"

Everyone suspended their card-playing to listen to the news.

"Poor young ladies!" said the old Spanish Consul. "You fellows had better leave your cards and go and dance with them!"

"Not we!" they cried. "They have treated us too badly for that!"

"I know what we can do, though!" said young Benson, the leader of the younger members of the club. Thereupon ensued much whispering and laughter, and finally the young men left the club in a body.

"There is mischief in the air!" said the Consul, as he settled down again to his interrupted game.

The young men went straight to the ball-room, and the eyes of the deserted maidens brightened considerably when they saw the new prospective partners enter. This was not to be a petticoat ball then, after all, though it had looked sorely like it a moment ago. Imagine then their surprise when they beheld these young gallants go striding up the room to where the chaperons were sitting, bored and weary, and commence at once to fill their cards with the names of these usually unappreciated partners.

The chaperons were radiant, and for the rest of the evening the girls were fain to sit disconsolately round the wall and watch their elders take the floor: There was no one even to take them down to supper, so finally they rose in a body and invaded the refreshment tables. Then they had to sit sadly and disconsolately waiting until their chaperons were tired, and ready to take them home! The tables were turned in truth!

The Man in the Moon looked down, but he was no longer smiling, and when he spied a certain little maiden, face downwards on her bed, weeping her heart out, something like tears filled his eyes also, and dropped on the little island with great big splashes:

"What an unexpected little shower!" said the loiterers, returning from the revels, as they quickened their footsteps:

In the beautiful, balmy Winter months,

the heritage of the West Indian Isles, somebody else came to the Island, a delicate American girl, ordered to the South for the Winter. She was fair and slender, like a lily, and was the idol of her parents' hearts. They were very wealthy people, and showered on their daughter all that money could buy; but money cannot buy health, and they knew that in all probability they had brought her here only to die.

As it chanced, Dick met her often. The girl loved sailing, and day after day he took the mother and daughter out in his smart little boat. At first she had to be gently carried on board, and she used to lie there on her cushions, silently drinking in the beauty of the brilliantly-coloured water, and gazing down through its cool transparency at the wonderful growth at the bottom—sea-fans, coral, and sponges, with here and there a brilliantly-coloured fish flashing about.

In time her eyes began to rest more often on the grave face of the young helmsman, and she wondered at its gravity.

"He is so young, so well, and so strong," she said to herself, "he ought to be so happy!"

One day, drawn by the magnetism of her eyes, he turned his head towards her, and she smiled at him wistfully and sweetly, and he silently smiled back, and so they were friends.

When she was stronger she liked to hold the tiller, and feel the smart little craft bend to her will, and he sat beside her, helping her, and teaching her such nautical science as he knew. Maisie, of course, heard of the intimacy of these two, that they were often together, and how fascinated Dick seemed to be by the American girl with her beautiful dresses, dainty jewelry, and charming manners, and her heart grew hard and cold with jealous misery.

"He never could have loved me," she said. "I was foolish to believe him."

Then the thought of his face when she told him that her programme was full came back to her, and she remembered how white and hurt he had looked when he turned away so abruptly.

"But it wasn't my fault," she repeated to herself, as she wiped away the tears that would come in spite of the brave words.

She and Dick had not spoken to each other since that afternoon, and poor old Aunt Clorinda was perplexed and worried, for she knew her darling was grieving herself ill, and yet there seemed nothing to be done:

The weeks went by, and it so happened that the American girl did in truth fall in love with Dick, and a fierce desire to live was born in her. She had heard a rumour of Dick's attachment to some girl of the place, but as there had never been a public announcement, and as he was never seen now with any other girl, she concluded that it had been some passing fancy which had blown over; and looking in her mirror she owned that her own fair beauty was sufficient to kill any remnants of affection for an old or fickle love.

The afternoon sails became her glimpses of Paradise, and was it any wonder that she grew better daily, and that a soft colour should come stealing into her cheeks and a beautiful glowing light into her eyes?

"It is the light of returning health!" said her adoring parents. "This place is wonderful!"

But the Man in the Moon knew that it was the love-light shining through her eyes, and the knowledge did not make him a bit happy or mischievous.

Dick was very gentle with her in his boyish way, for he could not but be sorry for the fragile life so dependent on others for all its joys, and she hid her feelings so shyly that he never guessed her love. He was only a simple islander, and his heart was filled with another girl, but this his companion could not know, and so she mistook his tenderness for love, and was very, very happy in the loving.

Then one afternoon her eyes were opened:

They were sailing as usual, her mother dozing in the bows with her book open, when they passed a boatful of laughing girls. The leader of the fun was a girl in pink, a pretty girl with little golden curls dancing round her face; her clear, ringing laugh came floating towards them, and they all involuntarily looked at the merry maiden.

It was Maisie, and Dick's face contracted for a second.

The American girl saw it.

"Who is the girl in pink?" she asked, for somehow she seemed to guess that this was the "Other Girl."

"Her name is Maisie Colquhoun," Dick answered, and his voice trembled in spite of himself.

"And who is Maisie Colquhoun?" she persisted.

Dick was no polished man of the world. At the simple question he gave a simple answer, primitive in its simplicity.

"She is the girl I love!" he said, and as he spoke there came a look into his eyes, such as the American girl had never seen on his face before, and she knew that he had spoken the truth.

Then Dick busied himself with the steering, and they had a silent sail homewards, for the poor little American Lily, her life-light crushed out of her, sat and drooped in the rays of the setting sun, and Dick did not even notice.

Next day the girl pleaded headache as an excuse for not going sailing, and somehow after that something always happened to interfere with their plans. Soon after, the American Lily went back to her native land.

"She seems to be losing all she gained," said her mother anxiously, and so in truth it was, and a few months later news came to the Island that the fragile Lily had been taken to bloom in another land of Infinite Calm, where 'tis said that the sick and weary are at rest, and all their tears are wiped away.

* * * * *

Maisie grew pale and listless, and everything seemed a weariness to her. Dinah said it was on "Account o' de fever," and Aunt Clorinda put it down to the heat, but both of them knew in their hearts that it was nothing of the sort.

It was again the time of the orange-blossoms, and the Man in the Moon again looked down on the garden of orange-trees, but there was no smile in his eyes, and he even looked a trifle bored. Yet the blossoms smelt just as sweet, and everything else was just as interesting as it had been a year ago!

There was evidently something going on at the Bungalow, for the wide verandah was hung with Japanese lanterns, the drawing-room floor was polished until it shone like glass, and lights and lamps were put in every available corner. Dinah was bustling about, looking extremely important, with a brilliant new bandana round her head and a snowy apron covering her very best black dress.

On the steps leading to the verandah was stationed a string band. The players were all coloured gentlemen, and all wore very white cuffs and collars, and flaunted knots of gaily-coloured ribbons from their guitars and banjos.

Aunt Clorinda was giving a party in honour of her niece's birthday. A Surprise Party she called it, and it was indeed a surprise, and a most unwelcome one to the heroine of the evening.

Never could Maisie remember a birthday on which she had felt so utterly miserable and wretched, and when Aunt Clorinda had told her to go and put on her prettiest frock, as she had prepared a little dance for her, the child had suddenly burst into tears, and vowed that she could not come down, she was ill, she was tired, her head ached, she only wanted to be left alone!

Poor Aunt Clorinda was most concerned, this was so unlike Maisie, and while she petted and soothed her, she insisted on tucking her up in her bed for a little rest. Maisie rebelled, wept, vowed that she wished she were dead, and refused all comfort. Finally, however, worn out with her emotions she dropped off into slumber, and the ball commenced without her.

She awoke refreshed and penitent. Certainly she had behaved very badly to her aunt, whose only thought had been to give her pleasure.

Quietly she got up, bathed her tear-stained face, slipped on her pretty dress, and stole downstairs.

Supper had just begun, and the dancing-room and verandah were deserted, while the sound of merry voices, mingled with the clatter and jingling of glasses, spoons, and forks, rang out from the room beyond.

She swiftly crossed the verandah and leant over the rails, drinking in deep breaths of the cool night air. As she stood there a figure moved quietly from the shadow of the magnolia tree and peeped into the empty drawing-room. For a moment the light showed up his features distinctly:

"Dick!" she exclaimed. "Dick!" and the blood rushed into her cheeks as she recognised him.

He started and turned towards her:

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing stiffly and awkwardly. "I have come to see my sister home."

"He need not be quite so quick to tell me why he has come!" thought poor Maisie, but she made no reply:

"Mother wished her to leave early," Dick stumbled on, "as—because——" He faltered and stopped:

"Oh, won't you have some supper first?" said Maisie hurriedly, hardly knowing what she said. "We have just begun."

"No, thank you," he replied, "I would rather wait out here."

A great wave of fragrance from the orange-trees enveloped them and for a moment both were silent:

Then Maisie turned quickly, and as she

did so her hair caught in one of the Japanese lanterns hanging in the honeysuckle. She tried to disentangle herself, but in so doing the fragile light tipped to one side, set the paper on fire, and in an instant there was a blaze.

She clasped her hands to her hair with a little cry, but in an instant Dick was beside her, his strong hands crushing out the flames and tearing the lantern down. He threw it on the floor and stamped out the last flicker. Then he turned to Maisie.

"You are not hurt?" he said, and though the tone was cold there was a tremble in his voice.

"No, I don't think so, but it frightened me, and I have not been well—my head aches—I know I am silly—but——" and there was the sound of a sob.

"Come into the garden for a bit," said Dick suddenly, and after a moment's hesitation Maisie went.

They went down the steps, across the pathway, down into the grove, and right on to the gate. As they came into the moonlight from the shade of the trees, Maisie stumbled and nearly fell. Dick caught her arm and steadied her, and the movement seemed to break some dreadful spell. He dropped her arm almost at once and leant against the gate struggling for words. He had so much to say, but how to say it? Then suddenly there was no need for any more words, for almost before he could realise what was happening a soft white arm stole round his neck, and a little fair head with golden curls was sobbing on his breast.

"Maisie! Maisie!" he murmured hoarsely, as his strong, young arms strained her to himself. "My little Maisie!"

Later on they strolled back through the orange-grove.

"Look at the Man in the Moon!" she said. "He's laughing all over his face!" But as she raised her face towards the funny old man up there, Dick had no eyes or interest in anything but the lovely look in her eyes, and kissed them repeatedly and unblushingly.

"For shame!" cried Maisie. "The Man in the Moon can see!"

But, as I said before, he is a man with very delicate feelings, and once more he was hiding his face behind a tiny little cloud.

And so peace reigned once more in the Island of Infinite Calm, where the orange-blossoms grow, and the palm-trees whisper to the wind:

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ELSIE'S PICNIC BASKET.

By A. M. JACKSON.

Telling how a kind man cured a little girl of a big disappointment.

A NICELY-PACKED basket stood on the dining-room sideboard, and Elsie knew her mother had not forgotten that everyone was to take something to the picnic.

Elsie peeped inside, and saw—a cake, some sandwiches, and a bright-coloured jelly.

“Just the right things,” she thought.

It was time to meet the rest of the party, and, after thanking her mother and saying good-bye, Elsie picked up the basket and ran out of the house.

As the basket was heavy, it took Elsie quite ten minutes to reach the cross-roads, where she was to meet her little friends; and when she got there, she could see no signs of them.

Had they not come yet, or had they gone on without her? Elsie wondered. After waiting a short time, she decided that they must have grown impatient and left her to follow them; so, as the woods where the picnic was to take place were not far away, she walked on by herself.

She had to go through a field and over a plank which was laid across a deep stream. There were a great many cows in the field, but Elsie was used to cows, and did not mind them a bit. Leaving the field, she came to the stream; and then a dreadful thing happened.

When she was on the plank, which was old and rotten, it began to slip away from the furthest bank; and Elsie tripped, the basket she was carrying turned upside down, its lid flew open, and all that was in it fell with a loud splash into the water.

Uttering a shrill cry, Elsie rushed ashore and leant over the dark, running water. But the cake, sandwiches, and jelly were gone for ever; and a small, screwed-up white

package which had caught in the side of the basket was all that remained. Elsie opened it. It contained salt!

Elsie lay on the bank and sobbed. She was a proud little mortal, and at first she thought, as she could only contribute a little salt to the picnic, she would not go at all. But soon the idea of losing all the fun and spending a dull day at home, instead of in the sunlit woods, overcame her scruples; and, drying her tears, she rose and trudged along dolefully.

When she got to the camping-ground, the baskets were being unpacked, and she heard her friends crying: “Oh! what a lovely chicken.” “Look at that cake,” and other remarks of the same kind.

Elsie, with her empty basket, hung back ashamed.

But she was soon noticed, and she had to tell all about the accident. The children said it did not matter, and that she could share what the rest had brought; but they laughed heartily and teased a little; and Elsie would have liked to cry again.

Then another thing happened—something pleasant this time. Somebody, who heard them all laughing, joined them.

Elsie knew the somebody very well by sight. He was a celebrated author, and he wrote charming stories for children, some of which Elsie had read and enjoyed ever so much.

“What’s all this racket about?” asked the author.

One of the children who knew him very well explained, and Elsie tried to run away. She could not bear that this great man, whom she had revered from afar, should laugh at her.

But the author laid a hand upon her

shoulder and stopped her. And, after glancing into her basket, he sat down opposite the chicken, and, placing Elsie in the seat of honour on his right hand, he offered to carve for the picnic party:

And there he sat and talked, joked, and told stories, until even Elsie forgot everything, except that she was listening to the great man, who talked quite as interestingly as he wrote:

Presently, however, the children noticed that though the author talked, he did not eat, and they all pressed him to partake of every dish; but he shook his head sorrowfully.

"I have a literary indigestion," he said:

The children did not understand what that was, but they felt very sorry for him:

"Isn't jelly good for that?" Roland, the great man's friend, asked:

The author shook his head again:

"Nor even chicken?" Roland exclaimed, awestruck: Anyone who could not appreciate jelly—and such good jelly—must be in a bad way, he thought:

"Well, perhaps a morsel will not kill me," said the author:

And he helped himself to part of a wing of the chicken, and asked for salt:

"Br-r-r, chicken without salt! I can't possibly eat any unless you have some salt," the author said, with a comical glance at Elsie:

"I believe we have forgotten to bring any," said Roland apologetically; and the other children, all but Elsie, gazed at each other in consternation:

Was the great man, who had been entertaining them, to go hungry because of their forgetfulness? Why, that would quite spoil the picnic!

Elsie drew her basket near her; and, taking out the so-lately-despised package, she presented it to the author:

"You have saved my life and my digestion, and enabled me to enjoy my luncheon," the author said, as he took the salt and bowed politely to Elsie:

Of course everyone laughed, and after that all went merrily as a marriage-bell; and the proudest and happiest child there was Elsie, for in spite of that miserable accident, she had been able to contribute to the picnic the thing that was of most importance;

✱ ✱ *THE CARELESS DOLL.* ✱ ✱

*I took my dolly for a walk—before we reached
the gate*

*She kicked one little slipper off, and soon
she lost the mate:*

*I took my dolly for a ride; it was a windy
day—*

*She broke her pretty parasol, her bonnet
flew away!*

*I took my dolly for a sail, and what did dolly
do*

*But drop her necklace overboard—it was
her best one, too!*

*And then the more I scolded her, the more
she smiled and smiled;*

*Now, would you take her out again—she's
such a naughty child!*

✱ ✱ ✱ *REFLECTIONS.* ✱ ✱ ✱

BY W. H. G. WYNDHAM MARTYN:

*It does seem funny when I think
That every horse I see
Was once a little baby horse
Not much more big than me;*

*To think they all had long tails once!
And all their knees were right!
And that they could eat grass all day,
And if they liked all night!*

*And just to see them now, poor things!
Some look so very worn:
As if they didn't have much hay
And hardly any corn:*

*So I am very glad to hear
Motors have come to stay;
And all the horses now can go
Out in the fields and play.*

*The poor lame ones will all get well,
The thin ones all get fat.
All will be happy and there won't
Be much to grumble at:*

THE DAY BEFORE.

BY HENRY STANSBURY:

*At last To-morrow's almost here;
My birthday's really very near;
I'm too excited much to play,
So fly away, you slow To-day:*

*Now dinner comes, and very soon
It will be quite the afternoon;
And then it will be time for tea,
And then it gets too dark to see:*

*When Daddy comes I'll try and spy,
To see if he has been to buy
The great big doll that shuts its eyes,
And when you pinch it somewhere, cries:*

*Quite early into bed I'll creep,
And try at once to go to sleep;
For that will make the night go fast,
And birthday will be here at last!*

BABY'S FRIGHT.

Which taught her not to run away from the nursery any more.

SN-SN-SNORE! Snore! came from the big arm-chair in the library, where grandpa was taking his after-dinner nap.

Baby Bess came toddling along the passage; she had managed to slip out of the nursery while nurse was downstairs, and somehow the little girl had found her way down the two long, slippery flights of stairs without falling and hurting herself.

Snore! Snore! Sn-sn-o-re! again came from the library. This time Baby Bess heard it and stopped to listen.

What was that strange noise? It was not Rover, for there he lay sound asleep in the porch.

Oh! where was mamma? Where was nurse? Where was everybody? Bess was so frightened at that strange noise!

There it was again——

Snore! Sn-o-re! S-n-o-r-e!

"Weally," said Miss Baby, "I'se so scared I'd like to scweam, but Bruvver Tom says only little dirls do that, and 'sides, if I do scweam no one's here to listen to me. I fink I'll peek in an' see if it's a big lion, an' if it is I'll wun, oh! so fast upstairs, an' I don't fink it can catch me."

So Bess tiptoed carefully to the door of the library and looked in:

There did not seem to be anything very dreadful in there; so she finally stepped in.

Just as she got inside the door the queer noise came again from the direction of the

fireplace, and Baby Bess looked quickly over there:

Oh! What was that on the floor? Was it a big lion after all, that would eat baby? There were its big head and staring eyes looking right at her, and its red jaws open, showing ugly teeth, and the big, hairy body sprawled over the floor:

Sn-o-re!

Baby Bess gave a loud, terrified scream and turned to run, slipping on the polished floor and falling flat.

"Bless me!" exclaimed grandpa, as, waking up, he rose and hurried over to the doorway, picking up his small granddaughter and kissing her.

Baby Bess no longer felt frightened when safe in grandpa's arms, and between her half-choked sobs she pointed to the hearth, and asked:

"What is that ugly beast? He growled at me when I came in so"—and she gave a good imitation of a snore.

All the family had collected by this time, and began to laugh, while grandpa grew rather red.

"I am afraid, baby dear, that it was grandpa you heard and not the beast on the hearth. That is only a tiger-skin and is not alive. See, the head is stuffed to look real."

Baby did not understand why grandpa should make such a funny noise, and in her heart of hearts she determined never, never to go out of the nursery again without nurse to take care of her.

DICKY'S SONG.

By JOSHUA GREGORY.

The story of a cat, a dog, and a canary.

"BOW-WOW-WOW!" barked Carlo, the big house dog. "Bow-wow-wow! the Mistress has come home."

He ran eagerly up and down the hall: "Wow-ow-wow-ow—be quick and open the door."

The black Pussy heard his voice and jumped up from the rug where she was lying asleep, and also ran into the hall. "Miaow," she called, "Trurer-er-er—Welcome, dear Mistress." How happy they were to see her! Carlo rubbed round her and would not let her move a step without him. He was so big that poor Mrs. Pussy had much ado to get near, so she made a great spring, and landed right on her Mistress' shoulder, and began purring and rubbing against her ear.

Now Dicky loved his Mistress very much, too, but he, of course, was shut up in his cage, so he was obliged to wait until she came to him, and then he showed his delight by hopping briskly up and down and by his joyous song: "Sweet! Sweet! Sweet!" he sang, and she gave him a lump of sugar.

"How Dicky sings!" said she. "Dear little bird, he loves me, too."

"Of course I do," cried Dicky. "Sweet! Sweet! Sweet! I love you so very much, dear Mistress, if only I could do something to show you that."

"What can you do, you stupid thing?" said Mrs. Pussy scornfully. "You can't catch mice, like I do."

"But she doesn't like you to catch mice," said Dicky. "It makes her unhappy, I've heard her say so."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Pussy, "it's the one thing she's foolish about; mice were meant to be caught, what else were they made for, I'd like to know? But I can do other things: I can amuse her, I can run and play with a ball—it is true I don't care for it as much as I once did, but when I do it she always laughs; and Carlo, too, takes care of her when she goes for a walk, though he is too big to sit in her lap or sleep on her bed, like I do."

"You can't protect the house, Mrs. Pussy," said Carlo suddenly. "I can; if thieves came, I should bark and bite and drive them away, that is most useful of all."

"I can sing," ventured Dicky.

"Sing! What nonsense! What is the

good of that?" cried Carlo and Mrs. Pussy together, "you make a great noise sometimes, that is all."

"There's the Mistress calling; she's going into the garden," cried Carlo, "I'm going, too." "So am I," said Mrs. Pussy. "But you, you silly bird, must stay in your cage."

Poor Dicky sat quite still, he felt he was very useless after all, and he ruffled up his feathers and sat in a little heap on his perch: He didn't care about the sugar any longer; perhaps Carlo and Pussy were right, he was a stupid little bird, he could do nothing but sing.

One morning the Mistress did not come into the breakfast-room as usual. People ran up and down hurriedly and everything seemed in a strange commotion: From his cage in the window, Dicky saw a carriage drive up, and a man stepped out and came into the house; after a while he came out again and, looking very grave, got into the carriage and drove away. Then by-and-by Dicky saw another visitor; it was a lady this time, she wore a blue cloak and bonnet, and a long veil; Dicky had never seen anyone like her before, and he was very puzzled: No one came to feed him, his water glass was half empty, and he had eaten nearly all his seed: What *had* become of his dear little Mistress?

Suddenly the door opened and someone pushed in Carlo and Mrs. Pussy. "Stop there, you tiresome things," said a voice, and then the door shut again with a bang.

"What is it? What has happened?" cried Dicky.

"Don't ask me!" exclaimed Mrs. Pussy angrily: "I'm sure I don't know, the way I've been treated, and all for nothing, too; I just went up to her room as usual and jumped on the bed; she was asleep, I think, but really I had not time to see, for a great, horrid creature in a white cap and apron seized me and bundled me out of the room; and, as if that wasn't enough, the cook was passing and she caught hold of me, and threw me in here: She *has* ruffled up my fur horribly." And Mrs. Pussy licked herself vigorously.

"She was just as bad to me," grumbled Carlo. "I only scratched at the door as I always do in the morning, but the Mistress didn't come to let me in, and that same

horrid creature in a white cap came and tried to drive me away. The idea ! but I wouldn't go ; I gave her a piece of my mind, and showed my teeth, and then she was frightened and called the cook, and she came up with a delicious bone, and called me ; I followed her downstairs, and when I got to this room, she pushed me inside, and shut the door and went away—with the bone ; it was such a nice one, too."

"But the Mistress—why doesn't she come?" asked Dicky.

"I don't know," said Carlo. "But I wish she would ; things are all right when she is here."

But days passed by, and still she did not come. Carlo went about with his tail hanging down, Mrs. Pussy moped in a corner, and Dicky, poor, wee Dicky, sat in a huddled heap on his perch, he could not sing now.

"She is very ill," said Carlo, "I heard them say so, and they are very anxious. Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! these are sad times !" and Mrs. Pussy and Dicky quite agreed.

So things went on for a very long time, and then one day Carlo ran in looking like his old bright self.

"Hurrah !" he cried. "Bow-wow-wow ! the Mistress is better, I have been to see her, she asked for me, and she patted my head, and said : 'Dear Carlo.' She is very thin and white, but she is better. Bow-wow-wow ! she will soon be well again !" and Carlo threw himself on the floor, and rolled and kicked about with delight.

"How glad I am," cried Dicky, "you are very lucky, Carlo, to be able to go and see her."

"I have been to see her, too," said Mrs. Pussy, "I have been lying on her bed for quite a long time this morning."

"Did she want to see me?" asked Dicky eagerly.

"No, I didn't hear her speak of you," said Mrs. Pussy.

"She has forgotten me," murmured poor Dicky, "I am only a stupid little bird, yet I love her dearly."

One happy afternoon people were quite busy in the breakfast room, and it wore its gayest air. A large easy-chair was placed by the window with soft cushions in it, and a footstool beside it ; Dicky knew what it meant, the little Mistress was coming at last ! What joy ! How he would sing to please her ! At least he could do that, and in his delight he began to warble softly a few sweet notes.

"There's that bird beginning again,"

said someone, "he's been quiet all through Janie's illness. Cover up the cage, he will make her head ache."

All the joy was crushed out of Dicky's heart ; his Mistress was coming, but he could not see her, for he was enveloped in a white cloud. Alas ! the only thing he could do was to sing, and they said that would make her head ache. Poor Dicky, he was very, very sad.

Presently there was a sound of footsteps and voices, and the little Mistress entered. How thin and white she was ! but she smiled brightly. Carlo threw himself down at her feet, and looked up into her face with his deep, loving eyes ; while Mrs. Pussy jumped on her knees and purred with joy.

"My darling," said a gentle voice, "will they not tire you?"

"No, mother, dear, do let them stay, they are so pleased to see me, and it's very nice to have them again: But why is Dicky covered up ? Take the cover off, please, I do want to hear him sing."

So the cover was taken off and Dicky crept close to the bars, and looked down with his bright eyes.

"Sweet ! Sweet ! Sweet !" he cried.

"Sing, dear Dicky," said his little Mistress.

Sing ? Indeed he would, for she wished it, he could give her pleasure after all. It should be the most beautiful song he had ever sung. His tiny throat swelled out and quivered as the sweet notes streamed forth ; he stood right up on his slender legs and poured out all the deep love of his heart ; he had never sung like this before, surely his Mistress would understand how dear she was to him. "Sweet ! Sweet ! Sweet !" how beautiful it was !

Ah ! what was that ? His throat seemed to grow dry and stiff, his song stopped suddenly. What was the matter ? His little heart was beating furiously, he felt quite giddy, his legs gave way under him, and he fell heavily to the bottom of the cage.

"What is it?" cried a voice, and then someone opened the cage and took him out.

"Give him to me," said the little Mistress: "Oh, mother, he is dying ! My dear, dear, Dicky," and the warm tears fell on the soft heap of golden feathers.

With eyes growing strangely dim, Dicky saw the sweet face bending down, and with a great effort he gave a faint chirp of content, then he stretched out his slender legs, and all was over ; for, in that one happy song of love, his faithful little heart had burst with joy.

Reaping the Whirlwind.

* * * * * By ALFRED LEWIS, A.R.C.A.

THE FIRST NINE CHAPTERS.

DURING the marriage ceremony between Miss Adeline Fane Capell, niece of a rich East Indian merchant, and the Hon. Kenneth Wilgorton, son of the late Viscount Clapham and of Lady Clapham, a slight disturbance is caused by two foreigners—a man and a woman—but no reason can be assigned for it.

On arriving at Mr. Fane Capell's house, the newly-made bride retires to her room. The next thing that is known is that she has disappeared, leaving a note for her husband, which says that she cannot live with him. No one had seen her go, but it transpires later that one of the foreigners who had been at the marriage was watching the house for a long time after the return of the couple. Could he have anything to do with the mystery?

Frederick Whinstone, Wilgorton's best man, starts to make some inquiries. He tracks down the two foreigners, and finds that they are a Madame Lenoir and her son, at whose school the missing bride was educated. They deny all knowledge of Mrs. Wilgorton, but outside their door Whinstone picks up a handkerchief bearing that lady's initials. He feels there is some deep mystery here, and returns at once to Wilgorton, who, as soon as he hears the story, starts off in hot haste with a pistol in his pocket.

Whinstone is engaged to Gertrude, daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, a couple with very decided religious views. After seeing Wilgorton, he goes to their house, where he is arrested on suspicion of murdering Monsieur Lenoir, who has been found shot in a railway carriage. He is allowed out on bail.

Invitations had been issued by Lady Clapham and her brother, Sir Julius Hoby, for a dinner-party to celebrate her son's marriage. It is too late now to cancel them, and the guests accordingly arrive. After dinner, Binns, the butler, startles Lady Clapham with the news that two persons are downstairs asking for her, and that they have come for her son.

CHAPTER X.

The Errand of the "Two Persons."

FOR a moment Lady Clapham was silent. She turned away from the man that he might not see her face.

"Ask Sir Julius to come here to me. Be careful how you give the message," she said in a voice which, in spite of her efforts, betrayed extreme agitation. "Stay! Where are these persons?"

"In the hall, my lady."

"Go. Be careful."

Sir Julius was in the dining-room, and was in the midst of a certain amusing anecdote he was fond of telling, and the archdeacon was getting uneasy, for his anecdotes were not always fit for reverend ears, when the butler entered, and made a whispered communication to the baronet. The latter had just begun to enjoy himself, and was at first inclined to resent the interruption; but the man's highly mysterious manner, and a glance at his face, which suggested something decidedly unpleasant, brought back fears and anxieties he had almost succeeded in banishing.

"Excuse me a moment; an important message," he explained, and left the room.

A stalwart constable in plain clothes was standing in the hall. He saluted the baronet.

"One of 'em has gone outside. I believe he's on the watch," whispered Binns.

"One of whom?" muttered the baronet, although he knew very well.

He did not speak to the constable, but

hurried upstairs to the landing where his sister was standing. After a moment's hesitation the constable followed him.

"They are policemen! They want Kenneth!" said Lady Clapham, in a hoarse whisper.

"The dickens! Not to arrest him?"

"Oh, I am afraid so. I don't know."

"Good Heavens!"

"Excuse me, sir and mum; it looks rude, I dessay, but you see it's my dooty," said the policeman, probably alluding to his walking uninvited upstairs.

"Who are you? What do you want? How dare you come up here?" demanded the viscountess, assuming a haughty composure she was far from feeling.

"Yes; who the blazes are you?" added her brother.

"I am Detective Phipps, and the man below is P.C. Gadd, Number 340. You see, sir and mum, or my lady, it's along of the murder of that Frenchman—Monseer Victor Lenoir: A gent was arrested and examined to-day; now there's a warrant out for the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton, who, I believe, is your son, mum, that is, my lady."

"It is a mistake, my man," said Sir Julius feebly. "Mr. Wilgorton is just married. He is away."

"We know all about him being married, sir; but about him being away, which I take to mean he is not in this house, that's another thing. And as to it being a mistake, that's for others to decide, I reckon. If he's not here, perhaps you'd have the goodness to tell us where he is?"

"I cannot do that."

"Then I expect we shall have to look through the house. You have company, I hear and perceive, and we always like to spare parties' feelings if we can. If Mr. Wilgorton will come quiet-like, or you will tell us exactly where he is, there need be no disturbance."

"I tell you Mr. Wilgorton is not in this house, and we do not know where he is. He has not been here since his marriage," rejoined the baronet.

"Oh, indeed, sir?" said Phipps. "From information received, we hear otherwise; leastways, the day of the wedding, after that ceremony, excuse me, sir."

"Yes, he did come home after the ceremony," put in Lady Clapham. "He remained only a few minutes; then went out and has not been here since."

"So we have heard, mum; but this is the place where we have to look for him first. Could your ladyship, now, tell me where he is, not being here?"

"My son was going to travel. I have not heard from him. I do not at present know his whereabouts. Your errand is an absurd one."

"That may be, my lady. We understand he didn't travel in the way he meant. If you have no objection, I must walk through the house."

"I tell you he is not here."

"Just so; just so, my lady. I am sorry to disoblige a lady, but dooty's dooty."

"He does not mean that he must go through every room in the house, surely. He cannot do it. I will not allow it!" said Lady Clapham excitedly.

"Dooty's dooty, my lady!"

"I will not permit it!"

"Let me see your authority for this," Sir Julius said to the man. He conferred with the constable for a few seconds, then turned to his sister:

"The man is right. There is a warrant. We cannot resist it."

"He shall not go through the house."

"Look here, my man," said the baronet, "there are visitors in the house to-night, and for you to be seen here would be very painful to Lady Clapham and to me. Mr. Wilgorton has nothing to do with this affair—"

"That's as—"

"Oh, I know you can't help your errand. But take my word for it, he is not here. The visitors are in the drawing and dining rooms. Just give a glance round the rest

of the house, if you must; then go quietly away."

In his desperation the baronet held out a sovereign.

"Bribery and corruption won't wash, excuse me!" returned the officer doggedly. "Dooty's dooty."

"You won't do what I ask you for any consideration—any consideration?" asked the baronet.

"Can't, sir, so there!"

"Look here, my man—do you know Mr. Wilgorton by sight?"

"Well, sir, I've got a description of him. Gadd—he knows him very well."

"Gadd is the man downstairs?"

"Yes, he be."

"Let him come in and stand behind this curtain. They are all ladies in the drawing-room just now. The men are coming upstairs. He can see them as they pass."

"That's all very well, sir. But I guess he'd have to go through the drawing-room, too."

"What—this Gadd?"

"Yes, sir."

"Surely—"

"Dooty's—"

"Yes, yes! I know that. I have heard enough about that."

Some further discussion followed, in spite of the officer's impatience, perhaps more than ever excited by the offer of money from Sir Julius. Lady Clapham would not yield. She declared most positively that the man should not go into the drawing-room. The detective persisted, and she wrung her white hands in despair. It would indeed be something for Mrs. Vandure and her other kind friends to talk about.

It was true that the visit of the police would be known all over London in the morning—and this her brother pointed out—but to have the men tramping through her drawing-room, in the midst of her startled guests, was more than she could endure. The greater misfortune of her son being arrested at all, and on such a charge, seemed for the moment to be almost lost sight of in the shame and annoyance the visit of the police officers caused her.

Could she have done it, she would have annihilated them both on the spot. She was not accustomed to have her will disputed, and for a vulgar policeman to defy her in her own house, as he would have defied a low person, was intolerable. She was one of those women who think that everything should give way to them, who never listen to reason

when it is opposed to their own wishes, whom nothing on earth can convince when once determined.

She became more resolved each instant not to yield; but, unfortunately, in proportion as her resolution became more strengthened, the representative of the majesty of the law became more obdurate. Perhaps her determined opposition served but to increase his suspicions. The situation was becoming serious.

"All I can tell you, mum—your ladyship—is this—opposition to me in the discharge of my dooty makes things worse—look worse, at any rate, though I won't say no more about the attempted bribery and corruption. The house is watched outside; nobody can't get out."

Lady Clapham deigned no reply. She stood directly in front of the officer.

"You say no one can get out without being seen," said Sir Julius. "Let that suffice. Watch outside."

"We can't wait, sir!"

"It is no use, Sabina."

"I will not permit it!"

"You must stand aside, my lady," said the man:

"I will not!"

For her sake Sir Julius essayed a little more persuasion, but it was no use.

"I tell you what it is," he said, a sudden thought striking him: "We can't stand here all night."

"That's true, and I'm not going to," assented the detective. "Gadd'll wonder what's up."

"Let the fellow who knows Ken come in, Sabina," pursued the baronet. "Perhaps he is not such a giant as you, constable, and he could put on a footman's coat for a minute or two, don't you see? Then he could look into the drawing-room without anybody being any the wiser. What do you think of that?"

Lady Clapham raised many objections, and the policeman raised objections.

"For Heaven's sake, Sabina, give in!" urged her brother. "If you don't he will force his way. He will be awkward, I daresay, but then he is a fresh man you have hired for the evening. Besides, there is no help for it. The people will already be wondering what is the matter. Go in and attract their attention in some way, and they may not notice when the man comes in. He will do it, and I will arrange."

She turned away, constrained at last to yield. The policeman's objections were

removed, possibly by the reproduction of the sovereign Sir Julius had before displayed: It was convincing proof that the baronet was in what he would have called "a deuce of a fix" that he produced the coin at all. He felt the need of sovereigns too much himself to lavish them very freely:

It would have been amusing to a disinterested spectator to see the way in which the detective took the tempting coin—how he looked at it, hesitated, and, finally, in an absent-minded sort of manner, clutched it in his broad palm, and slipped it into his pocket.

"We hev to rig ourselves out in disguises sometimes to nab parties," he said, "and there's no law agen it, as I know; but it depends on Gadd's consent, you know, and mum's the word."

He went downstairs and summoned his companion, who being of a slighter build was, after a brief colloquy, quickly metamorphosed into some resemblance to a dependant of the house of Clapham. It was by no means a good disguise. The constable's feet seemed preternaturally aggressive, and his head was of a distinctly different type from that of a well-trained flunkey, although a little powder was hastily shaken, much to his disgust, over his bristly hair. But it was the best that could be done. The solemn butler had to be taken into confidence, and this in itself was gall and wormwood to his haughty mistress.

The viscountess rejoined her lady guests. Mrs. Vanclure had already compared her with a Spartan, and it certainly required a great effort, and something like Spartan endurance, at the present moment to appear outwardly calm, and to dispense smiles and pleasant words amongst those about her.

There was a sickening fear on her son's account, which would have made most mothers careless of all other considerations; but to which in her was added a rigid determination to hide her terror, dread, and embarrassment from the eyes of all present that evening. She endeavoured particularly to engage the attention of Mrs. Vanclure, whose sharp eyes she dreaded:

Sir Julius went back to the dining-room, and perhaps was not so successful in hiding his perturbation as his sister. He quickly proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, and the men trooped upstairs just as a very awkward footman was carrying a letter on a silver salver to Lady Clapham.

The man was evidently so unused to his duties, he walked through the room in such an awkward manner, stared at every person present so fixedly, that general attention was aroused. He actually trod upon the gouty foot of the venerable archdeacon, thereby causing that worthy and distinguished ecclesiastic so much pain that he was as near uttering a bad word as ever he had been in his life. He also caught one of his clumsy boots in Mrs. Vanclure's train, and when that lady looked up in indignant surprise, he simply said, in tones very different from the smooth accents of a well-bred James or Thomas—"I arsk your pardon, mum."

There was an involuntary and general stare at the clumsy servant, and Lady Clapham's face crimsoned; but she was too wise to make any remark. She took the note the man offered her, barely glanced at it, and crushed it up in her hand. He turned, deliberately looked round the room, to the amazement of all who saw him, and walked back to the door.

Everybody felt that there was something amiss; but good breeding prevented even Mrs. Vanclure from making any audible remark. It was noticed that Sir Julius followed the man from the room. When the baronet returned a few minutes later, Lady Clapham saw by the expression of his face that the unwelcome intruders had departed, and she breathed somewhat more freely:

It usually happens that when people, under the pressure of a great embarrassment, exert themselves to make it appear that everything is just as usual, they overdo matters, and thus defeat their own purpose; and Sir Julius, really anxious to help his sister, was no exception to this. She saw the mistake he was making, and bit her lip with vexation. She was outwardly more self-contained than he; to dissimulate was easier to her than to him. Women not only have more natural tact, but they can more readily veil their feelings than men.

He talked much more than usual; he went from guest to guest uttering forced pleasantries; he insisted upon leading a young lady of musical tastes to the piano, and was very assiduous in turning over the leaves of the music-book, although it was an office he hated:

"What efforts our Julius is making," whispered Mrs. Vanclure to a gentleman who was seated near her. "*C'est fait de lui*, when he begins to make himself agreeable."

"There is something in the wind," was the reply, given under cover of the music. "It surely can't be bailiffs directly after this rich marriage of Kenny's."

"Marriage!" repeated the lady with a low laugh. "Did you ever hear anything so ridiculous?"

"Most extraordinary! Why, she hooked it immediately after the ceremony, I'm told. Poor Ken—poor chap!"

"You are a dreadful creature. I don't know what you mean by 'hooked it'—I positively don't," said Mrs. Vanclure, shaking her head. "She went off without a tender leave-taking, if that is what you mean. Poor dear Lady Clapham!"

"Poor Kenny, I say again. What on earth did she do it for?"

"Ah! thereby perhaps hangs a tale."

"Tell me the tale."

"Oh, you will soon know all about it, if there is anything in it. The blissful pair must have made it up again, or we surely should not be here to-night. By the by, Mr. Ganson, I believe you were right just now about the bailiffs. That elephant in boots, who came in with the tray, and who ruined my gown—the brute!—was serving a writ on Lady Clapham. You may depend he was. She has found out that marriage—even when the bride is as rich, or going to be, as—what's his name?—can be a failure." Mrs. Vanclure laughed again: "That clumsy wretch was no servant; not even a greengrocer's man."

"He looked to me more like a policeman. His feet betrayed him."

"It was you who suggested a bailiff. A policeman would be worse. What could he want—and what is the difference between the species when no uniform is worn?"

"Oh, you can always tell a policeman by his boots! Mrs. Vanclure, there are funny rumours about. I am serious. I heard just before I came here this evening that the man who ran away with Wilgorton's wife has been found dead—shot, murdered."

"Good Heavens! But did she really go with anybody?"

"They say so."

"And the man is murdered?"

"Didn't you know? Whinstone is arrested."

"Whinstone arrested? What for? When was the man murdered? How do you know it is the man? Why was Whinstone arrested? What had he to do with it? Our Whinstone, you mean?"

"Yes, Freddy: There is no other Whinstone."

"But why? I never read horrors in newspapers, and I have had a headache, and have seen nobody for two days until this evening—positively couldn't. All I heard was that the bride had secretly left her uncle's house directly after the ceremony. Of course, all sorts of things would be said, but I imagined that the happy couple had only quarreled just a little earlier than most happy couples do. For goodness' sake, tell me all about it."

"It is reported that Whinstone went off to see what had become of Wilgorton's wife, found her with the Frenchman in a railway carriage, and shot him."

"Good Heavens! You don't say so! A Frenchman—and he shot him? What an obliging friend!"

"It is a pretty awkward affair, Mrs. Vanclore."

"Oh, awful! But it was obliging of young Whinstone; you know it was. Did he take the lady back to her spouse? It is very shocking indeed. And what about Wilgorton?"

"Nobody seems to know where he is, and the bride is still missing also. I don't understand it. I was curious to see how things would go to-night. How well the old lady keeps up, if she has all that on her mind. It is frightful for them all."

"Of course, it is. And you pretended to know nothing, you false thing! Whom do you mean by the old lady? Oh, Lady Clapham! You are a greater wretch than ever to call dear Sabina an old lady. What next? Yes, she keeps up. I can scarcely believe all you have told me, but it is certainly more interesting to watch her than ever. She could always act, but this—why, I feel myself as if a thunderbolt had fallen: I wonder what we shall hear to-morrow? The man murdered! Young Whinstone! Oh, dear me! Yes, Mr. Ganson, it is indeed a charming song, and charmingly sung. Thanks so much, Miss Carrington."

The latter words were spoken in a louder tone as the song ceased. Lady Clapham had noticed the conversation between Mrs. Vanclore and Mr. Ganson, also certain furtive glances directed towards herself, and knowing their respective characters, had no difficulty in conjecturing the subject of their conversation. She would have talked about Mrs. Vanclore in much the same way, had their positions been reversed,

but this did not add much to her comfort.

She was feeling unspeakably wretched; her lips were dry; in spite of herself her hands trembled a little, and she had the utmost difficulty in responding to the bland sentences of the archdeacon, who was descanting to her upon some particular branch of church work; but let the morrow bring what it might, she was determined not to show her fear and dread to the curious eyes around her that night.

The trials arising that evening from unexpected and unwelcome visitors were not quite over. The butler again appeared with a folded paper on a salver.

"Act two!" murmured Mrs. Vanclore. "What is going to happen now?"

The man approached his mistress, and even his face was enough to create alarm in those who noticed it.

"If you please, my lady, two persons wish to see you very particular. They are not the same as before"—sinking his voice to a whisper—"and they say it is very important. It is about—"

With a sickening foreboding of fresh evil, Lady Clapham moved aside to speak to the man. Her face had become white and rigid. Oh, that all those people were miles away.

"About what?"

"About Mr. Kenneth's marriage."

With a desperate assumption of indifference, which again cost her a mighty effort, she took the paper from the salver, slowly opened it, and read—"Mr. and Mrs. Bopple, sexton, verger, and caretakers of St. Clement's Church, must see your ladyship very particular."

* * *

CHAPTER XI:

The Stolen Leaf:

LADY CLAPHAM maintained an outward composure, but she was in reality so unnerved that the ungrammatical scrawl she held in her hand filled her with a sort of terror. She stared at it in bewilderment. What fresh blow was about to fall? Things could not be worse than they were.

Two other persons to see her on important business connected with her unhappy son. How many more horrid individuals would come in couples to overwhelm and annoy her?

These were evidently not officers of the

law. One was a woman: Yes; they appeared to be attendants at the church where the wretched boy was married: What could they want? She must see them. It might be unwise and unsafe to refuse.

She looked round: Her brother was engaged in conversation at the other end of the room, and apparently had not seen the entrance of the servant. It was better so: With a few murmured words to those nearest to her, and still holding the paper in her hand, she left the room.

"Where are these people?" she demanded of the butler.

"In the morning room, my lady."

"How do you know their business?"

"They told me what it was about, my lady, and that is why I made bold to trouble your ladyship."

The worthy verger of the church of St. Clement and his wife rose to their feet as Lady Clapham entered the room.

Mr. Bopple, when arrayed in the black alpaca gown with velvet collar he wore in his official capacity, was a very respectable and rather important-looking man, solemn and grave, as suited his office, and the terror of mischievous little boys and other evil-doers; but dressed as he now was in the Sunday-best garb of ordinary life, and with a large silk hat, which he evidently did not know what to do with, in his hand, he appeared a nondescript sort of individual.

Mrs. Bopple was dressed for the occasion, and with great splendour. Her mantle blazed and scintillated with bugles, and the nodding plumes in her bonnet would have added fresh terrors to Hector's towering crest. She had put on her best "jooelry," consisting of rings—she had taken off one glove in order to display them—brooch, and a huge bracelet. She had also put on her most genteel manner, and her cockney accent, so difficult to reproduce, was more pronounced than ever.

Lady Clapham was richly clad: There were jewels on her neck, her arms, her bosom: Whether Mr. Bopple was so dazzled by so much real magnificence, confused by the presence in which he stood, or whether he was so much overcome by the importance of his errand as to forget his usual prudence, cannot be determined here; but certain it is that he so far forgot himself as to hold out his hand to her ladyship.

This was the more remarkable as, notwithstanding his self-importance, Mr. Bopple seldom omitted that outward reverence and

respect to his betters which he had so often heard inculcated from the catechism: Mrs. Bopple lowered her lofty crest to the lady of the house, until the jet ornaments on her bonnet flashed again.

"You wish to see me: To what may I attribute this visit?" said the viscountess in freezing tones, and ignoring the proffered hand, which the verger drew back as if it had been burnt.

"We thought we ought to make bold to see you concernin' that French party as have been up to her antics, my lady," replied the crestfallen verger.

"And we in the church haven't much time to call our own, so we thought we'd step round this evenin'," added his wife.

"I am at a loss to understand you."

"Well, your ladyship, a extraordinary thing happened this afternoon at St. Clement's, and I think you ought to know it before it goes further," said Bopple, fingering his hat. "The Honourable Mr. Kenneth Wilgorton is the party most concerned; but he not bein' ere, I'm given to understand—"

"Supposed to be on his weddin' tower," interposed Mrs. Bopple.

"Who are you? I see your name is Bottle or Baffle."

"Bopple, marm—that is, your ladyship."

"I do not comprehend."

"I am verger and sexton, your ladyship, at St. Clement's, where the Honourable Mr. Wilgorton was married, and which the paper which I think you holds in your hand tell you: Man and boy hev I been there for nigh on thirty year—"

"And an 'ighly respectable post it is, though not lucrative," murmured Mrs. Bopple.

"Yes, yes; but—"

"Bopple has something to tell you, my lydy—Mr. Wilgorton bein' supposed to be on his weddin' tower," went on the verger's wife, evidently anxious to talk: "We couldn't come earlier in the evenin'; that's why we're 'ere now when you has a party; for what with meetings for one thing and another, evensong, girls' friendly, bands of 'ope, churchin's, missionaries, and the like, we are pretty full up."

"I cannot listen to your affairs, my good woman: If you have anything of importance to communicate, tell it at once. If not, I must ask you to retire."

"I am comin' to it, marm, my lady: I think you ought to know what is goin' on. I didn't come to pleasure myself,"

said Bopple, in a respectful but aggrieved tone:

"No, indeed," concurred his wife. "I was a eye-witness to what 'appened, and I tell you it made me gawsp. So I came with 'im: And to tell the truth, I'm a bit faint now with standing."

"An eye-witness to what?" cried Lady Clapham impatiently: "Man or woman, one of you, speak out."

"I am quite aware that owin' to circumstances over which I 'ave no control, as the sayin' is, I do not move in what is called the hupper circles; but no one has no more right to call me a woman than any other person as I knows of," returned Mrs. Bopple, tossing her plumed head.

The viscountess placed her hand on the bell:

"You must please excuse my wife," said the verger, hastily and deprecatingly. "She hev 'igh notions, as if everything were known she p'raps has a right to hev through her father bein' a churchwarden hisself when he was alive. The archdeacon can speak for our respectability. What we hev come about is this: This afternoon, as I was preparing for evensong, who should come to St. Clement's but a little woman dressed in black—a foreign party—no other than her as shouted out like when the archdeacon was a-performin' the marriage ceremony between the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton and his good lady, and was just a sayin' 'anybody as knows any just cause or impediment' and cetera—"

"Go on, go on, please!"

"She come up to me quiet enough—she was that artful—and she says, says she: 'Are you the—' She used a foreign word as no doubt bein' interpreted means sexton or verger, such bein' my office. I answers: 'Yes,' I says, 'I am.' My wife was a standin' by at the time. 'I want to see what you calls the register,' the old party says in English. I hesitated, 'avin' had my eye on her at the weddin'. 'The fee is so and so,' I says."

"Go on, go on!"

"It's no wonder one feels bad, my lady; such howdaciousness! Well, she drawed out 'arf-a-crown—it was 'arf-a-crown, wasn't it, Sophia?"

Mrs Bopple nodded:

"She drawed out 'arf-a-crown, and then, of course, it were my dooty to show her the register. We went into the vestry, and when the book was open at the right page, she run her finger down, mutterin' some

French gibberish as I couldn't understand."

"And I've forgot my French, not 'avin' no occasion to use it of late years, though I have a aunt as 'avin' been a lady's maid in Paris in her youth can speak it well," said Mrs. Bopple with gloomy pride.

"When she came to the entry of the marriage of the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton, bachelor, and the—and Adeliza Fane Capell, spinster—she up and uttered a sort of yell—I never 'eard the like—and before I could say 'Jack Robinson,' she tore the piece right out. As sure as I'm a livin' man, she did!"

"And I was a eye-witness, and it made me gawsp, I just tell you," corroborated Mrs. Bopple.

Lady Clapham was standing stiff and erect. She waved her hand impatiently for him to go on: She was very pale.

"That for such a marriage!" she sort of screeched, snappin' her fingers," pursued the verger. "'They've murdered him! They've murdered him!' And before we could stop her she was out of the vestry, and tearin' along the aisle of the church like mad: I run after her, but she was too quick for me. You see, I was flabbergasted like, not expectin' such goin's on."

"And I had spasms awful, and the amount of peppermint I used would surprise you," remarked Mrs. Bopple.

"Of course, the law's on her track, though I've not been able to see the archdeacon," said her husband. "One of the curates, the Reverend Jawley, came afterwards, and she'll get it 'ot, the varmint!"

"Is that all?"

"All, my lady! Why, it's sacrilege, and a Parliament affair, I shouldn't wonder. I thought them as is most concerned ought to know private, before they see it in the newspapers. She took that 'arf crown with her, if you'd believe it, the howdacious jade—excuse me!"

"Mean, as well as wicked, I calls it, if you awsk me," said Mrs. Bopple.

"You do not know who the woman was?"

"No more nor Adam, only she and a man forced themselves in at the weddin'."

"Nor anything more about her?"

"No; not for certain."

"You have no more to tell me?"

"There was a young gent as come spyin' round on the day of the marriage, and inquiren' about that very old person: I hear as he's in prison on a charge of murder. I've not seen the paper myself,

but I hear it's a foreigner as have been murdered, and it jest struck me it might be the man as was with the old person."

"I didn't care for the young gent's looks, if you awsk me," observed Mrs. Bopple. "If the old woman's son's been murdered, it's no wonder she's mad, though why show her revenge on a senseless register is more nor I can tell."

"I am much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken," said Lady Clapham, touching the bell as she spoke. "Of course the woman was mad, and also of course, I can have nothing to do in this matter. You say the woman was French?"

"So I should think; leastways a foreigner," answered the verger.

"I know she's French. I cawn't be mistaken," said his wife loftily.

"Thank you. Binns, show these persons the door."

"My lady, we'd been at a good deal of trouble and inconvenience to come 'ere; not as we minds trouble in a good cause, and I p'raps oughtn't to mention it. I 'ears a sermon most days of my life, and I 'opes I profit by it."

"I trust so."

Lady Clapham, with the slightest possible inclination of the head, turned and left the room: Outside her fortitude nearly gave way, but drawing in her breath quickly, and pressing her hands tightly together, she walked upstairs.

"Some folks is too 'igh and mighty for their spears, lofty as they may be," remarked the verger's wife. "I'm blest if this don't beat everything! But I suppose, perked up in these 'ere spears, they cawn't help it: Yes, my man, we're comin'," she added to the grave Binns, who held the door open for them to pass out.

"It ain't as though we wanted anything from her but civility, which we didn't get," Mrs. Bopple went on, when she and her husband were in the street. "Sittin' is as cheap as standin' in most 'ouses, but not in this one, it seems, and as to a glass of wine—my word!" It is impossible to describe the withering scorn expressed in the last sentence. "I thought she'd be interested, and we should hev a nice if tryin' time. Hearin' as we did as the arch-deacon was there, I did think as we might p'raps ask to see 'im."

"We hev done mischief enough for one night, Sophia," returned Bopple gloomily.

His wife, however, affected to make light

of his fears, notwithstanding her own vexation: Feeling that the intelligence they had to give was of some importance, dressed in her best, and making, as she believed, an imposing figure, to say nothing of the distinguished appearance of Bopple himself, the verger's wife felt particularly aggrieved at Lady Clapham's cold, contemptuous hauteur. She expected to see her ladyship moved to great anger.

She had looked forward to the enjoyment of a discussion with her concerning the strange doings of the mysterious French-woman, during which discussion she hoped to learn a great deal more than she already knew, and which she could afterwards retail to her gossips, with suitable remarks upon the viscountess' state of mind, her great indignation against the author of the daring outrage at St. Clement's, her sympathy with the feelings of Bopple, and her extreme affability to them both.

Instead of all this there had been nothing but apparently haughty indifference.

The verger himself was in a rather crest-fallen and gloomy mood: He felt that his mission had not only not been a successful one, but that it might even prove detrimental to himself.

He feared that his wife had been rather too free in her remarks, and if Lady Clapham complained to the ecclesiastical powers at the church of St. Clement, where would he be? he asked himself. The powers of the State and the powers of the Church were leagued together, and their object, or at least one of them, was to keep such as he down. He remembered with increasing uneasiness his proffered hand and its rejection.

"I 'ave allus stood up for the aristocracy, but now—" again began his wife, but what she intended to say just then—how far her opinion of the British aristocracy had been changed by her visit to Lady Clapham—will never be known, for the sentence remained unfinished. In turning abruptly the corner of a street, a man with his hat drawn low over his eyes came in such sudden and violent contact with her as to nearly upset her equilibrium: With a muttered apology he hurried on and ascended the steps of Lady Clapham's house.

"Well, I'm sure! What next?" ejaculated Mrs. Bopple. "Look out, young man! It's rude, if you awsk me!"

Both she and her husband turned to look after the man:

"He reminds me of that Honourable Wilgorton as I've seen scores of times," said Bopple. "Wait a moment, Sophia."

"They saw the man ring and knock at the door of the Clapham mansion. The portal was opened, and he disappeared within."

"Oh, that's it, is it? It's him," said Mr. Bopple.

Another man, who had been standing in the gloom on the opposite side of the street, crossed over to them.

"Do you happen to know who that gentleman is who has just gone into that house?" he asked.

"Well, I think it's the Honourable Wilgorton, Lady Clapham's son—her second son, not the viscount," replied the verger, with reviving importance.

"Oh, you think so? You have just been in there yourselves?"

"And what may that be to you, pray?" demanded Mrs. Bopple.

"Oh, nothing particular, thank you. Good-night!"

"Well, I'm sure!" ejaculated the lady again.

"Come along, Sophia. I tell you we've got into mess enough for one night," said Bopple, relapsing into gloom once more.

"We, indeed! I like that! What do you mean by we? Let me tell you—"

The lady's voice could be heard in high-pitched tones for several seconds. Then it gradually died away in the distance.

* * * * *

The man who had so unceremoniously interrupted Mrs. Bopple's reflections on the aristocracy, and also nearly upset her physical equilibrium, was, indeed, no other than Kenneth Wilgorton. The servant who opened the door of his mother's house to him stared in affrighted amazement. The young man's face was pale, wild and haggard, and his dress, usually so neat, was untidy and neglected.

"If you please, sir, there is a dinner-party to-night," gasped the servant. Kenneth looked like one bewildered.

"To-night?" he repeated. "I will go quietly upstairs. Do not mention that I am here until the people are gone. Then tell my mother."

A little later all Lady Clapham's guests, except her brother, had departed, some of them eager to compare notes, and to talk over unreservedly their surmises and all they had seen and heard. The brother was talking earnestly in the drawing-room and Lady Clapham was describing the

visit of Mr. and Mrs. Bopple, when the butler, with a very mysterious air, again approached.

"What the dickens is up now?" muttered Sir Julius.

"What is it, Binns?" was his sister's impatient and almost terrified demand.

"If you please, my lady, Mr. Kenneth has come home," was the whispered reply.

"The dickens!" ejaculated the baronet again.

"What?" said Lady Clapham.

"Yes, my lady. He is in his own room."

"What shall we do? What shall we do? Oh, come with me!" she said to her brother.

Without another word they ascended the next flight of stairs. Kenneth Wilgorton was in his bed-room. Geraldine, who had heard him pass her chamber, was with him, her arms round his neck, her head on his shoulder, sobbing violently. He was endeavouring to soothe her, but his own appearance was sufficiently startling.

"Kenneth, unhappy boy, what is the meaning of this?" said his mother almost wildly. "What does it all mean? Geraldine, my child, go to your own room. I want—I must talk to your brother alone. Geraldine, do you hear me? Go!"

"Why should I go away? Oh, why?" sobbed the girl.

Gently disengaging her arms from his neck, Kenneth rose and led her from the apartment. In a few seconds he returned.

"Poor girl!" he said.

"Yes, indeed, poor girl! It will kill her, and it will kill me!" said his mother. "What does it all mean? Where have you been? Have you found Adeliza?"

He made no reply.

"Speak, Kenneth, if you would not drive me mad! You have not—you cannot have done this?"

"I think, Ken, it is about time you spoke out," said Sir Julius. "Your mother has a right to an answer to her questions—if you can answer them—to say nothing of me."

"Do you know what has happened?" asked Lady Clapham. "Do you know who has been here to-night? Oh, that I should live to see it!"

"Do you know that your friend Whinstone has been charged with murder?" added the baronet. "And that you—"

"I know that Fred Whinstone is innocent—that is why I am here!" answered Kenneth, and the despairing wretchedness

in his tone struck a chill to the hearts of his hearers.

At that moment there was a loud knock at the outer door of the house, and the bell was rung violently. Sir Julius went out on the landing to listen, while Lady Clapham stood rooted to the spot, the further question she would have asked dying on her lips.

They heard the street door opened, a few hurried words, and heavy feet began to ascend the stairs.

"Good Heavens, they are coming!" said Sir Julius.

* * *

CHAPTER XII.

Gertrude's Other Admirer.

MR. JOSIAH PIKE was a widower, and was reported to be possessed of large means, which he had inherited from his late wife. This lady was an elderly spinster, much older than he, when he married her; indeed, ill-natured people said she accepted him as a last chance to save her from perpetual maidenhood.

In all probability, however, her fortune would have saved her from that fate, if she had never seen Mr. Pike, since there are always plenty of people in the world with whom money and the solid advantages it brings outweigh every other consideration. Her fortune had come to her late in life, and as she was neither beautiful, amiable, nor accomplished, and had, moreover, spent many years in close attendance upon a sick relative, she had had few opportunities for matrimony in her youth.

Mr. Pike seized time by the forelock, and was one of the first to pay the lady marked attention on her accession to wealth, and as a suitor he was then eminently successful. He carefully studied her interests as soon as they became his also, was a kind and faithful husband as long as she lived, and when she died she endowed him with all her worldly goods.

He had not married for beauty, but neither could his wife have been drawn to him by his personal attractions. His appearance has already been described, but it was rendered more grotesque by the costume he usually wore.

His clothes were made to fit so closely to his corpulent figure that Bob Brunell used to say he looked as if he had been poured in a molten state into them. He had a great fancy for horse riding, which may have accounted for his tight clothes, horseman-

ship at that period being considered to require such.

He was very vain of his riding, at least, so it was believed, inasmuch as if he met any of his friends when indulging in this exercise, he invariably made his gallant steed prance and curvet in a way which, if it did not "witch the world with noble horsemanship," caused some terror amongst timid pedestrians.

Mr. Pike was said to have once held some Government appointment, but he was now a man of leisure, and also a man with a mission. This mission was to expose and stamp out if possible the Romanising tendencies of the clergy of the Church of England.

Mr. Pike passed much of his time in going from church to church suspected of ritualistic practices, and protesting against the services.

He was prominent at public meetings called for the purpose of warning easy-going English Protestants against "the Roman conspiracy," and he assisted in the dissemination of a highly sensational and anti-ritualistic literature.

It was in the character of Protestant reformer that Colonel Brunell first met him, and considering him to be a pillar of the faith and a most worthy man—virtues which were not lessened in the colonel's eyes by the knowledge that he also had abundant means—introduced him into his family circle.

Josiah Pike was a curious mixture of sincere conviction, of fanaticism, religious bigotry, self-assertion, worldly shrewdness, cunning, and lack of real prudence. That he was capable of other and softer feelings than those connected with his self-imposed mission was proved by the evident admiration he soon displayed for Gertrude Brunell.

Mr. Pike's eyes followed Gertrude's movements when she was present, and if she chanced to enter the room, even when he was in the midst of one of his most spirited tirades against the errors of Rome and Rome's imitators, he would pause and sometimes sigh in a manner her brothers considered ludicrous.

To these brothers all this was a source of great amusement, and some good-natured railery, but to Gertrude herself the little amusement she might have felt was quite subordinate to the annoyance it caused her, especially when she saw that her father was not displeased at Mr. Pike's attentions. She might have regretted the matter on

Mr. Pike's account also had she realised how sincere his admiration for herself was.

In her distressed state of mind on the day when Whinstone had been arrested in her father's house, on such a serious charge, she felt little inclined for company of any kind, and certainly not for that of her elderly admirer, but consideration for the wishes of her mother prevented her from returning to her own room when informed by her brother that "that blooming Johnnie" and "old owl Pike" was downstairs.

Gertrude Brunell had been brought up in a narrow school of thought. Few of the pleasures which fall to the lot of most girls in her position had ever come her way. Her father frowned upon what he considered purely worldly amusements, however innocent.

His sons, it was true, indulged in worldly amusements, and not always the most innocent ones, pretty freely, but it was from home, and the colonel, for the most part, seemed oblivious of the fact. With his daughter it was different. She was more under his eye, and more amenable to him.

Gertrude's life had been a dull and monotonous one, and was not made pleasanter by the fact that her natural good sense forced her to see some of the littleness, uncharitableness, bigotry and hypocrisy of certain of the visitors at her father's house. Of her father's own sincerity, she, fortunately, had no doubt, although this did not prevent her from being in some measure conscious of his weakness.

The colonel sometimes, like Silas Wegg, lapsed into poetry of his own composition, poetry which he even had printed for circulation amongst his friends, acquaintances, and, indeed, any other people who chose to purchase a copy, the proceeds to be devoted to charitable purposes.

The verses were more remarkable for pious and orthodox sentiments than for originality or poetic inspiration. It did not require much literary judgment to see this, and it annoyed Gertrude when she heard the extravagant praise bestowed by Mr. Pike and others upon these lucubrations, because she did not believe the praise to be quite sincere.

Colonel Brunell contemplated the publication of a small volume of his poems (they had hitherto been published separately, or in pamphlet form). This volume was to be called by the original title of "Wanderings of the Sacred Muse," and Gertrude imagined,

rightly or wrongly, that the encouragement he received in the matter from Mr. Pike was due rather to that gentleman's wish to ingratiate himself with her father than from any real conviction of the merit of the poems.

Why did he wish to ingratiate himself with her father? It is said that a woman is seldom mistaken as to the nature of a man's feelings towards herself, and although not quick to jump to such a conclusion, she could not help seeing that she herself was the motive which actuated Mr. Pike.

There are undoubtedly women to whom any conquest is enjoyable, whether they care for the captive they have taken or not; but Gertrude was not one of these. She was engaged to Frederick Whinstone, and she cared for the admiration of no other man. Her parents were opposed to the engagement, and only consented to it on condition that it should not be considered binding, and that it should be kept secret for a time.

Gertrude began to think it would be well if Mr. Pike were taken into confidence concerning her betrothal. It was perhaps only due to him. Other visitors at the house knew or suspected the truth, but he apparently did not.

Frederick Whinstone had come into her life like a new revelation. He was so tall, so handsome, so strong, so sensible, so different in every way from the majority of the men she had hitherto met.

The members of the society in which she and her parents moved were chiefly all of one type, and that type not one at all likely to commend itself to a young and healthy girl.

All the romance which had hitherto been repressed in her nature was called forth by her love for Whinstone. Life wore a different aspect from what it had ever done before: Her imagination had never been fed by poetry and romance.

She knew singularly little about what are called the lighter forms of literature. The books tolerated in Colonel Brunell's house were all of a serious cast, and many of them weak and dull, as well as serious. The ordinary religious story is, unfortunately, not often a very vigorous or mentally elevating kind of work, and she had read few such, contenting herself for the most part with more solid works.

Her brothers and, perhaps, her sisters, regularly procured and surreptitiously read books of a very different class; but from a

sense of duty she had never done so. Imagination, however, is not altogether dependent upon such influences. Love had been the revealer to her, the opener of the gates leading into the enchanted land; and she now indulged in dreams as rosy as ever visited romantic maiden's reveries.

The shock caused by Whinstone's arrest was proportionately great; not that she could doubt for a moment but that the dreadful mistake would quickly be set right. But added to the anxiety which, in spite of this confidence, she was bound to feel, was the fear, well grounded, however unreasonable it might appear, that her father would regard the circumstance as an additional argument against her engagement to Whinstone.

When Gertrude entered the drawing-room on this particular evening her mother was knitting, Agatha was kneeling on the hearth-rug playing with a kitten, and her father sat by the side of Mr. Pike, reading to him from the MS. of his proposed publication. The worthy champion of evangelical doctrine was apparently listening intently, his head thrown back, his eyes closed, and the tips of his fingers pressed together; but he rose immediately the door opened, and greeted the girl with effusive politeness.

"Ah, dear Miss Brunell, I am charmed to see you. I hope your head is better."

"Yes, somewhat; thank you."

"So glad. I have been conversing with your father, and I have indeed enjoyed a feast of fat things. He has favoured me with a recital of some of his poems."

"You like what I have read?" said the colonel.

"My dear Brunell, I am delighted. The book is sure to be a great success. Such spirituality! The passage about the scarlet robed and golden crowned woman sitting on the seven hills is—is—so original—in that application."

"I thought the Scarlet Woman had been done hundreds of times, pater," said Robert, who had also entered the room.

"Robert!" said his mother reprovingly.

"We cannot too often lift up our voices against idolatry and superstition, Mr. Robert," replied Mr. Pike. "I said it was original in that application: You see, originality depends upon how a subject is treated—handled. They say that even that most lauded and worldly poet Shakespeare did not scruple to borrow the subjects of his—his compositions from other writers. So I have heard."

"I don't know much about books," returned Robert. "Do you read Shakespeare, Mr. Pike?"

"I? No, my young friend: I have more serious business in life than that."

"If I were you, pater, I would have another title. It seems to me I have seen heaps of 'Sacred Muses.'"

"Then there will be another to add to your heaps, Robert," answered the colonel, with some asperity. "You confess your ignorance of books, and yet you say you have seen heaps bearing the same title as my humble attempts. Do try to be consistent."

"All right. Books are certainly not much in my line, especially poetry books."

"It would be better for you if you did read more, Robert," said Mrs. Brunell.

"What is called the divine afflatus is not given to everyone, nor even the power to appreciate it in others," remarked Mr. Pike. "I admire your father's writings very much, Mr. Robert, under whatever title. Even apart from their literary merit, the sentiments expressed are so sound and good. In poetic compositions the sentiments are often such as those who take serious views of life and its duties cannot agree with. I am afraid you are not feeling quite as well as usual, dear Miss Brunell."

"I am very well, thank you."

"Why, Gerty, you have been ill all the afternoon," said Agatha. "It is all through what happened this morning. You were dreadfully put out about Fred Whinstone."

"I have told you, Agatha, dear, that we are all distressed," said Mrs. Brunell. "You must not chatter so much."

"Ah, he was a friend of the family, poor, misguided young man," said Mr. Pike.

"Why misguided?" asked Gertrude quickly, her face flushing.

Mr. Pike also reddened a little.

"My dear Miss Gertrude, I did not mean to offend. The dreadful position, you know."

"Yes, it is a dreadful position, but that does not prove that he was misguided. You seem to mean that he is to blame."

"Oh, no, no, I cannot say positively that he is to blame, but most people are aware that such charges as that against him are seldom made without some cause. I do not at all suggest that he is guilty."

"I should think not."

"Mr. Pike is quite right," said Colonel Brunell severely. "Whinstone has, no doubt, been indiscreet in some way. Got himself mixed up with this awful affair

somehow. I am afraid he wants ballast—such ballast as only firm and definite religious convictions can give him. His friendship for Mr. Wilgorton may have made him do some foolish thing. I am sorry for him, as I should be for anyone in such an appalling position. From what I hear, it is a strange and shocking affair, not fit to be discussed here."

At this moment dinner was announced:

The youngest son, Frank, was dining out that evening. As soon as dinner was over Robert disappeared. He was supposed to retire to his room to read law in the evening, but his father forbore to question him very closely on the subject. The young man seldom appeared in the family circle again until the next day, and if he was not at his studies he ought to have been:

Though not given to drinking wine, or to indulgence in the fragrant weed, the colonel and Mr. Pike remained in the dining-room talking after the ladies had retired:

Mrs. Brunell was called away on some household matter which claimed her attention; Agatha went to amuse herself by strumming on an old piano in what was called the school-room, and Gertrude sat alone by the drawing-room fire, thinking deeply.

It was hard to hear Frederick spoken of in the way he had been referred to that evening: She was quick to resent any imputation upon him, and it seemed to her that there was more in the tones than in the words which had been spoken. If he had been indiscreet, which, however, she did not at all believe, it was, as she had told her mother, a generous, unselfish indiscretion, arising from a wish to serve his unfortunate friend:

Whatever they might say, and whatever might happen, they should never turn her against him. He was truly in an appalling position: What would be the end of it?

She had told herself over and over again that there could be but one end so far as he was concerned—a complete and triumphant acquittal. But now a sort of terror seized her. Had she not heard of men being condemned and even suffering death for crimes of which they were perfectly innocent? Her heart sank like lead at the thought:

Or, if it did not come to the worst, he might, unless the real culprit were discovered, be doomed to a life of unmerited suspicion—so unbearable to a generous mind—and be shunned and pointed at by all. Her very

ignorance of the law and its procedure magnified to her the danger:

The hope and belief with which she had buoyed herself up seemed to be crumbling away: Mr. Pike's remark that such charges were seldom made without a cause troubled her, because it suggested that other people—the vast majority of people, perhaps—not knowing Frederick, might think as Mr. Pike thought; and this might lead to undue importance being attached to circumstances in themselves perfectly innocent, but which could be made by prejudiced minds to appear distinctly incriminating. Even judges and juries were not always right, or the guiltless would never be made to suffer:

Who had committed the murder? Where was Wilgorton, her lover's friend, in connection with whom this seemed to have happened? Surely he would come forward when he heard of the dreadful position Frederick was in?

Why had Adeliza, Mr. Wilgorton's beautiful bride, fled from him on the very day of the wedding? She could not have been forced to marry him against her will. She was rich—an heiress—and independent. If her uncle disinherited her she had still large means, or what to Gertrude seemed large. Unless she had suddenly gone mad the motive which induced her to act in such a manner must indeed have been a powerful one.

Had the murder, indeed, anything to do with her flight? Gertrude shivered. She knew too little about the wickedness of the world, and was too pure-minded to imagine any really scandalous reason for the flight, and yet she shrank from the thoughts which began to press upon her:

It has been said that she did not personally know Adeliza. They moved in such very different circles. Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, and consequently Gertrude, had little to do with that worldly section of Society to which the Capells belonged—oil and water might as well be expected to amalgamate as these opposing sections. But she had frequently heard of Adeliza from Whinstone, of her exceeding beauty, and of her amiability; and she had looked forward to making her acquaintance after the return from the wedding tour.

Gertrude was so immersed in her thoughts that she did not hear the door open, and was quite unconscious of the presence of anyone else in the room, until she heard Mr. Pike say:

"A penny for your thoughts, Miss Gertrude."

(Another instalment of this exciting story next month.)

A Startling Announcement.

BY THE EDITOR.

You must all have been reading in the newspapers about the horrors of the tinned meat factories of Chicago, and how the writing of a novel called "The Jungle" has thrilled the whole world with its exposure of the terrible conditions under which the work in the packing houses has been carried on.

I have the pleasure to announce that next month's NOVEL MAGAZINE will contain the first instalment of an unique work by Mr. Upton Sinclair, author of "The Jungle." Told in story form, thrilling with human emotion, it portrays, right up to the tragic dénouement, a true account of Mr. Sinclair's own life and early struggles in pursuit of fame.

It is a living document of intense interest, every page of which throbs and palpitates with emotion. Never before has so vivid and realistic a picture of suffering genius been portrayed. The author vivisects his very soul, and records faithfully, in fine and forcible language, the daily mental and physical sufferings of a great mind amid sordid and commonplace surroundings.

The fact that this story is a record of Mr. Upton Sinclair's own life would alone make it well worth reading, but apart from this, its human interest and high literary merit will win it admiring readers in all ranks of life. That its author is one of the best-known and most talked-of men of the day does not soften the fact that as a beginner his vicissitudes were terrible. No one who reads Mr. Upton Sinclair's own life story will fail to realise for a moment that its author has won his fame dearly and gone through the mill of bitterness and despair

I have no hesitation in saying that this tragic life story of a famous author will be the sensation of the year. You and all your friends absolutely must read it. Remember, the first instalment will appear in the next—the September—issue of THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.

Mrs. Oxton's Jewels. ❖ ❖

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ By JAMES WORKMAN.

Telling how their mysterious disappearance nearly caused a tragedy.

THE PROSPECTIVE BRIDEGROOM.

THE sun was shining out of a clear blue April sky, sparrows were chirping gaily on the roof, hansoms rattling merrily across the gravel, and busy feet trampling the pavement beneath, as Ned Harper, of Bacon's Inn Square, stepped briskly out of his bedroom.

Mrs. Perkins, the laundress, who had left the kitchen door slightly ajar, applied her eye to the crevice and groaned internally as he entered the sitting-room, where the table was laid for breakfast. Usually most careless about his personal appearance, he was now arrayed in a manner that took the good woman's breath away.

His beard had been carefully trimmed and his hair cut, with the result that he looked fully ten years younger. His threadbare pants, frayed at the hem and baggy at the knees, his shiny, dilapidated jacket, and shapeless Turkish slippers, had disappeared. In his hand he carried a pair of gloves and a resplendent silk hat, wore a flower in his buttonhole, and was attired in patent-leather shoes, irreproachable trousers, and a black frock coat.

With a sniff of mingled grief and scorn Mrs. Perkins turned away. It was the old story. She was going to lose another of her "gentlemen" as she had lost so many in the past.

Fascinated by the pretty face of some "chit of a girl," as she expressed it, he was going to exchange the solid comforts of a life of single blessedness in chambers, watched over and cared for by a mature and experienced woman like herself, for the uncertain joys and certain troubles of matrimony. These periodical departures curtailed her income and depressed her spirits, and formed a standing grievance upon which she was ever ready to dilate.

In the meantime Ned had placed his hat and gloves on a chair, and was helping himself to bacon and eggs and tea. Having swallowed a mouthful or two he pushed away the plate, and rose to his feet.

"I can't do it!" he muttered. "Who can concentrate his mind on toast and bacon when he's going to be married in a couple of hours?"

He looked at his watch.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "it's ten o'clock, and Dick not up yet. He'll be late, as usual."

He hurried to the door, opened it, and called out: "Dick! Dick!"

"Yes," replied a sleepy voice.

"Get up, you lazy beggar. It's ten o'clock, and you'll be late. Get up, I say."

He came back into the room, and began brushing his coat and hat with the most scrupulous care. Then he commenced the arduous task of putting on his gloves. While he was thus occupied, Mrs. Perkins emerged from the kitchen with the coffee-pot for Dick's breakfast.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Perkins," said Ned cheerily.

"Good morning, sir," rejoined the laundress glumly. "Why, you haven't scarcely touched your breakfast, sir."

"Well, no," answered Ned, with an embarrassed laugh; "it seems altogether too commonplace to take any interest in eggs and bacon this morning. Don't you know that this is my wedding-day?"

"So I've heard, sir. I suppose you're glad to get away from chambers, and have a house of your own, sir?"

"Certainly. Most men look forward to doing that at some time or another."

"Well, sir, all I can say is—I 'ope as you'll be 'appy, but——"

"But what?"

"Well, I've known many a young gentleman, if you'll excuse me saying so, sir, as wished theirselves back in their chambers before the honeymoon was over."

"Oh, yes," rejoined Ned, pulling away at his gloves; "but then, you see, they didn't know how to choose the right sort of wife. Many fellows don't."

"They mostly think they do, sir," answered Mrs. Perkins meaningly.

"Yes, yes, of course," answered Ned indifferently: "You see, when a man's in love with a girl he naturally considers her an angel, and nothing you can say to him will ever convince him that she isn't. A man in love is the most pig-headed creature in existence."

"Well, if others is mistaken, you might be, too, sir," was Mrs. Perkins' parting shot.

As she banged the kitchen door behind her Dick entered the sitting-room arrayed in a capacious dressing-gown. He was a tall, bronzed, good-looking young fellow, with well-cut features and keen, grey eyes.

"Hallo!" he said. "Something funny going on? What's the joke?"

"Oh, nothing much: Mrs. Perkins' liver is out of order, I suppose. She actually suggested that after a six months' engagement I might possibly be mistaken in Maggie's character."

Dick sat down with a shrug of the shoulders:

"Mrs. Perkins is a sensible woman," he said. "Of course you may be."

"Of course I may be!" exclaimed Ned.

"Certainly: Do you mean to tell me that a man ever understood a girl's character before he married her, or even after he had done so, for that matter? Why, you inconsistent old fraud, I've heard you say yourself that it was simply impossible, scores of times."

"Pooh, pooh!" exclaimed Ned. "I don't care a snap of the fingers what I may have said or left unsaid. Every man talks rubbish about such things at times. I say now that if you know that a girl is not merely pretty and clever, but affectionate, unselfish, and as innocent of evil as a little child, you understand that girl's character well enough to be certain that the man who becomes her husband may consider himself a lucky fellow, as I do."

Dick chuckled, and went on with his breakfast without replying. Ned moved to the window, and watched the people hurrying across the square with dreamy eyes. Presently Dick glanced up at the silent and motionless figure:

"You're not hurt by a bit of silly chaff, old man—eh?"

"What an idea!" rejoined Ned, wheeling round with a good-humoured smile: "I'd forgotten all about it. But do hurry up, or you'll never get dressed in time."

"The fact is, you know," continued Dick, "that when a fellow sees another fellow

enjoying a particularly good piece of luck he feels an irresistible desire to take him down a peg or two, especially when he puts on side. Now, lately you've been putting on a good deal of side, Ned. You can't deny it."

"Well, I believe there's nothing gives a man such a good opinion of himself," Ned rejoined with a laugh, "as the love of a pretty and clever girl. Try it, my dear fellow, though upon my word I don't think it's at all necessary that you should have a better opinion of yourself than you have always had since I knew you, Dick."

"Thanks," replied Dick, with a grin: "Then you're not sorry to leave the old place, Ned?"

Ned glanced round at the untidy and somewhat dingy room:

"Yes, I am, though, Dick," said he: "We've had some rare good times together—haven't we?"

"Yes: Do you remember our first quarrel?"

Ned laughed:

"Perfectly: It was about getting some coals one night when Mrs. Perkins had gone home—wasn't it?"

"Yes, and each of us thought the other ought to get them, and so we tossed up."

"Yes, and I won."

"Yes," chuckled Dick, "but you got the coals all the same."

"I believe I did," answered Ned: "You generally contrived to get everything your own way in the end, Dick."

"Of course I did, and your wife'll do the same if you don't take care, my boy. You're a jolly sight too good-natured, Ned, that's what's the matter with you. You let people impose on you. You should stand up for yourself more, and insist on having *your* way whether other people like it or not."

Ned's eyes twinkled pleasantly:

"Well," said he, "you never gave me that piece of advice before, Dick."

Dick chuckled audibly.

"No, of course I didn't," he rejoined: "You see, as long as you shared these rooms with me I naturally wanted to have *my* way, and if you'd insisted on having yours I shouldn't have got it."

"Ah, well, we managed to jog along very comfortably—together, after all," replied Ned. "I shall miss the old place many a time, I've no doubt of it. And now let me give you a piece of advice, Dick."

"Eh, what's that?"

"Get a wife, Dick. If you go on as you are doing you'll degenerate into a mildewed old bachelor like I was a few months ago. Take my advice, Dick, and get a wife."

"Wait till you've got a wife yourself, Ned, before you advise other people to take one. Perhaps you won't give me the same advice six months from now."

"You incorrigible sceptic!" exclaimed Ned. "Ah, you don't know, old chap, what entire trust and confidence I place in the dear girl who is going to share my future life. I would as soon believe that she is not all I think her to be as that the earth is flat, or the moon made of green cheese, or any other absurdity of the kind."

"Oh, indeed!" said Dick drily, as he got up to fill and light his pipe. "As I haven't yet had the pleasure of being introduced to the young lady, you can hardly expect me to be quite so enthusiastic as yourself, old man."

Dick, who was a special correspondent, had just returned from China, and had not even seen the girl to whom Ned had become engaged during his absence.

"I can't help thinking it's a pity I wasn't on the spot to make a few inquiries before things went quite so far as this," he continued. "You see, you're just the kind of chap that an artful and designing woman could twist round her finger."

Ned's mild eyes flashed, and his cheeks flushed as he drew himself up.

"Take care, Dick," said he. "There are things that even you——"

"Stop, stop, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Dick. "You quite misunderstand me. I'm not saying a word against Miss Grant. She is probably all you think she is; but come, tell me honestly, what do you know about her?"

"I know *her*," rejoined Ned. "That's enough for me."

"Precisely so. But it doesn't seem enough to an unprejudiced observer like myself, by a very long way. You said that before she aspired to become a journalist she lived for some years as a sort of companion with an old school-friend, a Mrs.—Mrs.——"

"Oxton."

"Mrs. Oxton. Well, do you know the Oxtons?"

"No, I don't."

"And you haven't made any inquiries with regard to her antecedents? You don't know any of her relatives?"

"No. I told you she was an orphan, and practically alone in the world."

"Ah, yes, just so. Well, if I'd been here I should have advised you to make a few inquiries about such matters."

"May I ask if you have any special reason for talking in this way, Dick?" asked Ned, in an ominously calm voice. "I mean, have you heard something that you consider it your duty as a friend to repeat to me?"

"Not a word, my dear fellow," rejoined Dick. "I am merely suggesting, more than half in fun, that before taking so irrevocable a step it would have been prudent to——"

"Then, if you will permit me," interposed Ned quietly, "I think that we had better put an end to a discussion which cannot possibly be of service to anyone concerned. I haven't the shadow of a doubt that the moment you set eyes on Maggie you'll have as high an opinion of her as I have. Go and get dressed at once, or you'll be—— Well, what is it, Mrs. Perkins?"

Mrs. Perkins had thrust her head in at the door.

"A gentleman wishes to see you, sir: I told him you was engaged, but he says it's something very particular, sir, and he must see you."

"Did he tell you his name?"

"Mr. Oxton, sir."

"Oxton? Ah, show him in at once. Now, what on earth can Oxton want with me? I never set eyes on him before. It'll be something about the wedding, suppose."

"Very probably," said Dick drily.

* * *

AN UNEXPECTED BLOW.

MR. OXTON was promptly ushered in by Mrs. Perkins. He was a tall, thin, rather prim-looking man of fifty, with cold eyes, and a somewhat formal manner. He bowed stiffly to Ned, who advanced to meet him.

"Mr. Harper, I presume?" he inquired.

"That is my name," said Ned. "Won't you sit down?"

"Well, the fact is," replied Oxton, with the corner of his eye on Dick, "that my business is of a peculiarly delicate nature. If you are engaged I could look in again in—in a few minutes."

Dick promptly moved to the door, but Ned stopped him with a quick gesture.

"This is my friend, Mr. Greville," he said. "He is as well acquainted with my affairs as I am myself. You can speak freely before him."

Oxton bowed.

"Take a seat, Mr. Oxton," continued Ned, removing his hat and gloves in order that Oxton might find a resting-place free from light literature or wearing apparel. Then he glanced at his watch.

"You'll excuse my saying that the time at my disposal is very limited, and so——"

"So you naturally wish me to come to the point at once," said Oxton. "Well, I will do so. But I am afraid I must warn you that I am reluctantly discharging a duty that is likely to be painful and disagreeable to both of us. I believe you intended this to be your wedding-day, Mr. Harper?"

"Pardon me, it is my wedding-day," rejoined Ned emphatically.

"I hope not, Mr. Harper."

"You hope not!" exclaimed Ned. "What am I to understand by that, if you please?"

Oxton raised his hand with a deprecating gesture.

"Now, my dear sir," he said, "I beg that you will preserve your self-control until you have heard me out. I must also intreat you to remember that it is entirely out of consideration for you that I am undertaking this painful duty."

Oxton had the air of one who has undertaken an unpleasant task, but is conscious of doing it in just the right way in which it should be performed. His deliberation and palpable self-satisfaction set every nerve in Ned's body on edge.

"The name of the young lady to whom you are engaged is Miss Margaret Grant, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Now, are you aware that Miss Grant is an old school-friend of my wife, and that she resided in my house for several years up to a few months ago, when she left to embark upon — ahem! — a journalistic career?"

"Yes," said Ned, "I am fully aware of all that. She told me all about it."

"My wife had a very high opinion of her, treated her as a sister, took her entirely into her confidence."

Ned wriggled impatiently on his chair.

"Yes, yes; just so," he said; "she gave me to understand so; but may I ask you to be good enough to come to the point?"

"I am coming to it, Mr. Harper. My wife had a large collection of jewels which she kept in a secret drawer. The only person outside the family who was intrusted with the secret of that drawer was Miss Grant. A day or two ago, for the first time since Miss Grant left the house, I opened the drawer and discovered that the most valuable of the jewels were missing."

Ned rose from his seat.

"I see," said he slowly. "You connect the disappearance of these jewels with Miss Grant's knowledge of the secret drawer. Well, sir, in a couple of hours Miss Grant will be my wife, and will then be delighted to give you any information which she may possess upon the subject."

Oxton gazed at him in astonishment.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I think you cannot clearly have understood me. I must frankly inform you that it was to prevent your committing the irretrievable mistake of making Miss Grant your wife that I came here this morning."

Ned could no longer control his indignation.

"Then I must inform you, sir," he exclaimed, "that you are simply wasting your time. Do you suppose for a single moment that I attach any importance to your absurd suspicions?"

"I do not base my accusations upon suspicions," retorted Oxton. "I have proofs."

"Proofs that Miss Grant is a thief!" cried Ned. "Now, upon my word——"

"Steady, old man," interposed Dick, laying his hand upon Ned's arm. "Let us hear them, Mr. Oxton."

"Certainly. I have traced the jewels. They were sold to a wholesale jeweler by a lady heavily veiled, but answering, as regards height, figure, and so on, to Miss Grant. She received notes in exchange for the jewels. One of these notes for fifty pounds has already been traced. It was cashed by Miss Grant at Mildmay, Watkinson & Co.'s bank."

"How do you know that it was Miss Grant who cashed it?" asked Dick.

"The teller who cashed it is her cousin, and distinctly remembers giving her gold for the note."

"Is that the case? Has she a cousin at the bank, Ned?" inquired Dick.

"I—I believe so," Ned stammered.

"Ah," said Dick.

"I have the note here," continued Oxton, producing a bank note from his

pocket-book, and handing it to Ned. "It is indorsed by her. See—Margaret Grant: Is that her signature?"

Ned glanced at the signature, and turned hurriedly away:

"Yes," he faltered:

Oxton restored the note to his pocket-book, and rose from his seat, hat in hand.

"The proofs are simply irresistible," he said. "Otherwise I need hardly say I should not have presumed to come here on such an errand as this. Now I have something more to say, and I am afraid it is not the least painful part of my task. I hold very strong views on these subjects. I do not believe that the guilty should go unpunished. To allow them to do so is an offence against society: Besides, it encourages them to become habitual criminals. I will not for a moment be a party to hushing this thing up. The girl must submit to the inevitable consequence of her wrong-doing."

"Perhaps you will tell us plainly what you propose to do, Mr. Oxton?" said Dick.

"I am coming to that. I may say that up to last night I was weak enough to allow my wife's intreaties to delay any action on my part; but when I heard that this girl was about to involve an innocent and honourable man in her own ruin I felt that it was my duty to hesitate no longer. I came to break this miserable news as gently as possible. Perhaps I have done it clumsily, but my intentions were good."

"Oh, yes," said Ned bitterly, "the intentions of those who inflict such wounds as you have done are always good."

"You may at least be grateful to me for saving you from irretrievable shame and ruin," Mr. Oxton said with some asperity. "If I had not appeared on the scene you might in a few hours have become the husband of a convicted thief."

"You are not the only person, Mr. Oxton," rejoined Ned quietly, "who is anxious to fulfil what he considers his duty. You have fulfilled yours. I mean to fulfil mine."

Oxton stared at him in undisguised amazement:

"You do not mean to say," he exclaimed, "that you will be mad enough to marry this girl after what I have just told you?"

"That is my intention," replied Ned.

"Then I warn you," said Oxton, "that in the interests of society as well as your own, I shall do all that lies in my power to prevent your committing such a piece of folly. A warrant has been obtained for

this girl's arrest. I know the church where your banns were published: I shall have her taken into custody as she enters it."

He was moving hastily towards the door when Ned interposed.

"Stop a moment, if you please, Mr. Oxton," he said. "You are, I am sure, a kindly and reasonable man, and will at least listen to what I have to say: I have spoken hastily, and I believe unjustly: I was, as you can readily understand, very much distressed and excited, and I hope you will be good enough to excuse me."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Oxton: "Pray don't say anything more about it: I quite understand the situation. But really, you know, this project of yours is—"

"Yes, yes," interposed Ned, "that is what I am going to speak to you about: I wish to make it clear to you that what you have just told me—heart-breaking as it is—cannot alter my feelings towards the young lady in question. I ask but one favour, and that is that you will do what you can to postpone her arrest until after the marriage has taken place: Even if she is arrested now, and subsequently convicted and imprisoned, I shall marry her the day she is released."

"Well," declared Oxton: "If you are determined to commit social suicide I shall make no further effort to prevent you: I simply warn you that no mercy will be shown your future wife. She will be arrested as she leaves the church."

With a shrug of the shoulders Oxton made for the door, but suddenly stopped and turned back.

"You had better talk it over with your friend here," he said: "I am very much mistaken if he does not give you the same advice as I have done: I wish you good-morning: I cannot wish you happiness, for I believe that it would be a mockery to do so."

"Good-morning," said Ned huskily:

As the door closed behind Oxton, Ned sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

A CHIVALROUS RESOLVE

THERE was a prolonged silence: Dick was naturally frank and blunt of speech, and prided himself on being superior to anything in the shape of weak sentiment; moreover, he was capable of stating the most unpleasant truths in the plainest language, without reference to the

feelings of anyone concerned. But the situation with which he was now confronted struck him speechless.

The sight of Ned's suffering inflicted so keen a pang of pity upon him that he shrank from adding to it by saying bluntly what he believed it would be cowardly to leave unsaid.

Still, he could not endure the thought of such a man as Ned being caught in the toils of this unscrupulous woman, and being dragged down by her and her shady friends. Clearing his throat, which had grown curiously husky, Dick began :

"Ned, old boy."

"Well?" rejoined Ned, almost inaudibly:

"You and I have had many a squabble and all that sort of thing, but our friendship has stood the test of partnership in chambers for more than five years, and that's saying a good deal—eh?"

"Well?"

"You won't think I'm exaggerating when I say that this news gives me almost as much pain as it gives you?"

"It's kind of you to say so, old man," said Ned drearily. He was resting his chin on his hand, and gazing moodily into the fire. Dick nervously knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and went on :

"I would give all I possess to stand by you, to tell you that I think you are acting well and wisely. I can't, Ned."

"I'm sorry for that, Dick," rejoined Ned, in a pre-occupied voice, as though he only half heard or half understood what Dick was saying.

"To tell you the plain truth," continued Dick, "I firmly believe that if you marry this unfortunate girl you will make utter shipwreck of your life. I should be a false friend if I did not tell you so. It is a piece of quixotic folly. It is sheer madness. Think of the future."

"I am thinking of the future, Dick—*her* future. You only talk of what will become of *me* if I marry her. What will become of *her* if I don't marry her, Dick?"

"Oh, my dear Ned!" exclaimed Dick, "you really should look at this matter from a more practical point of view: Heroics are all very well in their way, in poetry and fiction and so forth, but in real life one must look at things as they are, and not as they ought to be. The truth is that you will not succeed in raising the girl to your level; you will simply degrade yourself to hers."

"Dick!"

"Oh, it's no use blinking the truth. That will be, must be, the inevitable outcome of the business. The girl has bewitched you. You credit her with virtues and graces which are solely the creation of your own imagination. Postpone the marriage. Wait until you can think over the matter calmly and dispassionately, and, believe me, you will thank Heaven you have not thrown away your happiness, spoilt your life, and ruined your future for a mere passing illusion."

"You mean well, old man," rejoined Ned, "and in your place I daresay I should take the same view of the matter that you do, but as it is I can't. I suppose that knowing she has done this thing ought to alter my feelings towards her, but it doesn't. It only makes me pity her, and want to help her."

"But why not postpone your marriage until you know that she is worthy of your help?"

"So that you and the rest of my friends might do all you could to put a stop to it—eh? No, I can't agree to that, Dick. You think I don't see the seamy side of the business, but I do, and very clearly, too."

"And you've absolutely made up your mind to go on with it?"

"Absolutely."

"Then I'll say no more, but if you're bent on going through with the marriage I'll support you as I promised."

"Thanks, old fellow," said Ned gratefully: "That's good of you—that's like you: I'll see you again soon."

He stepped into his bedroom, and left Dick standing on the hearthrug.

"Like me," growled Dick to himself. "I hope to goodness it isn't. It's the most stupendous piece of folly I was ever mixed up in. What has come over the fellow? I could always twist him round my finger before, and now he's as immovable as a rock."

"It's evidently no use talking to him, and of course the girl herself won't back out, no fear. And yet I don't know. I wonder if there's a ghost of a chance that I could induce her to do it? Of course she'd have to be bought off, but it's just possible the thing could be managed. Besides, if she knew the police were after her, she might get frightened and bolt. That would be a blessed way out of the difficulty. By Jove, I'll try it. I can dress in five minutes, and drive to her place and back in another ten. Mrs. Perkins!"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Perkins, entering promptly with a tray in her hand.

"Tell Mr. Harper that I've had to go out, but I shall be back in a few minutes."

"Very good, sir."

Dick hurried out, dressed himself with incredible speed, and was soon heard clattering down the stairs:

Mrs. Perkins began with great deliberation to remove the breakfast things, muttering half audibly to herself as she did so:

"Going to be married, is he, poor young man? Ah, if young gentlemen knew as much about girls as I do they wouldn't be in such a hurry to marry them: Honey for a month and vinegar for the rest of your life—that's about the long and short of matrimony: And yet he's all of a flutter to be off: As if he wasn't 'appier here in his chambers with a respectable woman like me to look after him, than he'll be as a married man with a house of his own! He won't get reading and writing and smoking all day long in peace and quietness as he does here, getting up when he likes, and going to bed when he likes, and having his meals just whenever he feels inclined to: Wait till he has to keep regular hours, and let his papers be tidied up, and isn't allowed to smoke in the drawing-room, and it won't be long before he'll be wishing himself back in Bacon's Inn, poor young gentleman."

She was still clattering the dishes and muttering to herself when Ned entered, looking pale and depressed:

"Where's Mr. Greville?" he asked:

"He's gone out, sir, but he said he'd be back in a few minutes."

"Very well: By the way, Mrs. Perkins, you're not going to get rid of me quite as soon as you expected."

As he spoke he took the flower from his buttonhole and threw it into the fire. Mrs. Perkins' curiosity, insatiable at all times, was instantly aroused. Ned's haggard face and drooping figure would have suggested to a much less keen observer that things were going badly with him:

"I'm real glad to hear it, sir," she remarked; "though I hope as nothing has gone wrong, sir."

"I may find it more convenient to remain here with Mr. Greville for a few months," rejoined Ned curtly:

"I hope as nothing's happened to the young lady, sir."

"The wedding is not postponed, Mrs. Perkins."

Mrs. Perkins made a desperate effort to keep back the flood of questions that surged to her lips, but the effort was in vain: Her

brain was busy with a thousand conjectures as to the mysterious situation that would not postpone the marriage, and yet would apparently lead to a separation of the newly-wedded pair:

"I suppose you can't get a house to your mind, sir?" she hazarded:

Ned remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the carpet:

"Any member of the family ill, sir?" she continued blandly:

Still there was no reply:

"Will you be back to lunch, sir?" she persisted:

Then a thing happened which, as she explained later to a friend, "struck her all of a heap." The most patient and long-suffering of all her "gentlemen" turned on her with fierce face and flashing eyes:

"Will you oblige me by attending to your own affairs, Mrs. Perkins?" he exclaimed: "I pay you to light the fire and make the beds, and wash the dishes, not to cross-examine me as if I were in a witness-box. Oblige me by remembering that in future."

He vanished hastily, banging the door behind him, and Mrs. Perkins stood gazing after him with open mouth, a teacup and saucer in her hand, an expression of bewildered amazement upon her wrinkled features:

"Now, did you ever?" she muttered: "Something has gone wrong to be sure. I never saw Mr. Harper put out before: That's the first cross word he ever spoke to me in his life. Well, it's a disappointing world, that it is: I suppose that young hussy's been behaving bad to him already: It seems to me it's the good men who always get the bad wives, and the good wives as get the bad husbands, so-contrariwise do things go in this world."

A cab rattled noisily across the gravel, and drew up opposite the door: She promptly raised the window sash and looked out: Catching a glimpse of a feathered hat and flowing skirt, and Dick assisting the wearer on to the pavement, she drew back in disgust:

"Well, I do declare," she exclaimed: "If she isn't coming here after him: It's the queerest wedding I ever see: I suppose there's been a quarrel, and she's come to make it up."

A light, brisk step was distinctly audible ascending the staircase, and Mrs. Perkins hastily bundled the remainder of the breakfast things into the kitchen: Then, as a

sharp tap sounded at the door, she went to open it. A young lady confronted her on the threshold, and Mrs. Perkins, a shrewd and not unkindly woman, in spite of her misanthropical maunderings, was melted at the sight of the gentle, refined face, and the slim, graceful, daintily-dressed figure before her.

"Is Mr. Harper in?" asked the young lady pleasantly.

"Yes, miss. Will you come inside, miss? What name if you please, miss?"

"Tell him Miss Grant wishes to speak to him."

"Yes, miss."

Mrs. Perkins' cold eyes had grown mild and even friendly: She had been young herself, and a bride herself, and she felt a sudden thrill of tenderness for this pretty creature with the sweet face and dainty garments that lit up the dingy chambers like a ray of sunshine:

"She's a kind face," thought the old laundress, as she shuffled out of the room, "though the face may be fair and the heart false, more's the pity."

And Miss Grant, left alone in the sitting-room, acted in a way that might well have aroused the suspicions of a keener judge of character than Mrs. Perkins, for though her eyes were twinkling with mirth she threw herself into an arm-chair with her back to the light, pulled out a handkerchief, applied it to her eyes, and had all the appearance of one who is overwhelmed with grief:

* * *

THE SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERY.

A MOMENT later Ned came hurriedly in, looking flushed and excited. At the news of her unexpected arrival a wild hope had flashed through his mind that it was after all just possible that a mistake had been made, and that she had come to proclaim her innocence. But when she remained silent and motionless, holding the handkerchief to her eyes, he turned sick at heart with despair. It seemed an unmistakable proof of her guilt.

For a few moments he stood looking at her in speechless misery, and then, recovering his self-control, went slowly towards her, and placed his hand gently on her shoulder:

"Good-morning, Maggie," he said. "I am glad you have come. I did not expect to see you before we met at the church. Is there anything particular that you wish to see me about?"

"Yes," she answered from behind the handkerchief, "I felt I must speak to you, Ned. I came to tell you something you ought to know before I become your wife. Perhaps when you have heard it you won't want to marry me, Ned."

"I know everything, Maggie: I heard it all from Mr. Oxton."

"And you don't hate me, Ned?"

"It would be impossible for me to do that, Maggie."

"And you still wish to marry me?"

"Yes, dear," he said gently. "Now more than ever: Do you think I would forsake you now just when you need me most? That would be a poor way of showing my love for you, Maggie."

Maggie's eyes emerged for a moment, took a swift, half-laughing, half-tearful glance at him, and disappeared.

"Wait till you hear my confession," she said, "and then perhaps you'll change your mind, after all. It's nothing to do with what Mr. Oxton told you. You see, I've always liked you, Ned, liked you very much indeed. I couldn't help doing that—everybody does. And I was sure that if I became your wife you would be good and kind to me. But I—I'm afraid I didn't care for you in the way I—I ought to have done, because, you see, you're not a bit like the man I always thought I should marry. But I was so weary of being dependent on other people, and so afraid of living a lonely, loveless life, and becoming a soured, broken-hearted old maid. That's—that's why I said I would marry you, Ned. Can you care the least bit for me now that you know the truth?"

"Well, of course, I'm sorry to hear it," said Ned, a little ruefully; "but then, you see, I always thought it was hardly possible that you could care for me in—that way."

At that Maggie threw away the handkerchief, and rose impulsively:

"Then you're a dear, stupid old goose, Ned!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "There isn't a girl in the world half good enough for you: Why, that was only before I really knew you, and since I've got to know you, and after what you've done to-day, I—I can't tell you what I think of you, or how much I—I care for you. Why, surely you're not really angry with me? Won't you give me even a smile?"

Ned looked wistfully at the pretty face, but he was far too miserable to smile.

"You mustn't be vexed with me, Maggie,"

he said sadly. "You see, I—I can't help thinking of the future. Do you know that in a few hours from now—"

"I shall be in prison," laughed Maggie. "Ha, ha! So Mr. Greville told me. I met him outside."

The laughter jarred on Ned's ears. It was unseemly, flippant, wicked to laugh at such a moment.

"Maggie," he said reproachfully, "I must say frankly that I think you treat this matter too lightly."

"Shall I have to sleep on a plank bed, and have nothing to eat but bread and water?" she cried. "Couldn't you bail me out, Ned, or something of that kind?"

"Hush, hush, Maggie," rejoined Ned, hurt and amazed at her manner. "Your levity surprises—pains me."

She suddenly wheeled round and faced him. All trace of humility and penitence had vanished. She drew herself up to her full height of five feet one, and regarded him with haughty disdain.

"Do you mean to tell me in sober earnestness, Mr. Harper," she asked indignantly, "that you believe your future wife to be a convicted thief?"

The sudden attack bewildered him.

"I would give my life to believe otherwise, Maggie," he said helplessly.

She threw up her arms with a despairing gesture.

"Oh," she exclaimed, with a stamp of the foot. "And this is the faith, the love of a man! A woman would not have believed such a thing of the man she loved if she had seen him do it with her own eyes."

A sudden flash of hope illumined the poor fellow's mind.

"Why, Maggie," he exclaimed excitedly, "do you mean—"

But Maggie swept indignantly past him towards the door.

"Excuse me," she said. "If this is the trust and confidence you place in me I am indeed glad to think that I have not yet committed the irretrievable mistake of becoming your wife. Good-morning, Mr. Harper."

Trembling with agitation, Ned placed himself between her and the door.

"Maggie," he cried, "for pity's sake don't trifle with me, don't torture me. Is it possible that there has been some mistake, that after all you are—"

She handed him a letter she had taken out of her pocket.

"Read that, if you please," she said, "and you will see for yourself."

He opened the letter with trembling fingers. It shook in his hand as he read it:

DEAR MAGGIE,—It has all come out, as you warned me it would sooner or later. Yesterday my husband discovered that the jewels were missing, and was so angry that I simply dared not tell him that I had sold them. You know what a coward I am, and he frightened me dreadfully. And— Oh, Maggie, forgive me if you can—I let him suspect you of having taken them. He managed to find out that you had cashed one of the notes I got for them. It was shameful, wicked of me, but I wanted to get away and then write to him, and tell him the truth. I intreated him to let the matter drop, but when he heard that you were to be married to-day he insisted on telling Mr. Harper, and obtaining a warrant for your arrest. He went out an hour ago, and I have been nearly frantic ever since. I have written him a long letter explaining everything. I shall leave it here, and go and stay with mother until the storm blows over. Try to forgive your broken-hearted friend,

ALICE OXTON.

Long before he got through the note, Ned was reduced to a state of humility that bordered on the abject. Surely, he told himself, he might have guessed the truth. To suspect a girl like Maggie of such a crime was not merely absurd, it was monstrous. Instead of playing the hero, he had been playing the fool. How could she ever forgive him?

"Mr. Oxtton," she said icily, when she saw that he had read the letter, "is a good man in his way, but cold, and a little hard, and a trifle stingy. Alice is weak, emotional, extravagant. There you have the situation in a nutshell. She runs up bills without consulting him, and when it is necessary to tell him she puts off the evil day as long as she possibly can. Then comes the inevitable scene, explanations and tears, and a visit to her mother. She had gone further than ever on this occasion, and sold some of her jewels to pay a particularly importunate creditor. She is just about my height, and somewhat similar in appearance, and the jeweler's description of her would naturally suggest me to Mr. Oxtton. I got my cousin to cash one of the fifty-pound notes for her, and that is all I had to do with the matter from beginning to end, except that I told her she was acting very foolishly, and sooner or later would be found out."

For some moments Ned remained incapable of speech. He could think of nothing to say that would excuse what appeared to him now his utterly inexplicable belief in her guilt.

"Mrs. Oxtton did you a great injustice, Maggie," he stammered at length, "and

begs you to—to forgive her. Will you try to forgive me, too, Maggie?"

"Yes, I'll try," she said coldly. Then she swept towards him, and seized both his hands in hers.

"Oh, Ned!" she exclaimed, with a queer catch in her voice, "what an old—old muff you are! Why, when I think you would have married me even when you thought I was what that man said I was, there is nothing in the whole wide world I couldn't forgive you."

He held her at arm's-length, and gazed at her in happy silence.

"I said I was a lucky fellow an hour ago, Maggie," he remarked at length, "but even then I hadn't an idea what a lucky fellow I was. I told Dick— Oh, confound it, someone's coming: I believe it's Dick."

It was Dick, festively arrayed, carrying a large bouquet, that scented the room with delicious perfume, in his hand:

"Hallo, Ned!" he exclaimed: "You're going to be late, as usual: Come, hurry up. It's time to start."

Ned turned to him with a radiant face:

"Why, Dick, old man," he cried joyously, "do you know—"

"Yes, I know everything," interposed Dick. "I met Mrs. Har—I mean, Miss Grant, outside and told her you were going to throw yourself away on her. I'm not sure now that she isn't throwing herself away on you."

"Do you know what Mr. Greville came to propose to me?" asked Maggie severely: "He wanted to— Oh, I shall tell!—he wanted to—"

"Hush, please, for Heaven's sake, hush, Miss Grant!" pleaded Dick: "I was crazy: I didn't know what I was saying: Look, I've brought you a peace offering: Don't be too hard on a fellow!"

Maggie hid her laughing face among the flowers he gave her and held out her hand:

"Thank you very much, Mr. Greville: You know how to bribe me. I shan't breathe a word to anyone, not even to Ned."

"Thanks awfully: There's another penitent outside: May he come in?"

"Mr. Oxton?"

"Yes."

"I—I don't know. May he, Ned?"

"Oh, yes, let him come in," rejoined Ned, too happy to harbour bitterness against anyone.

Oxton came in, looking so worried and depressed that Maggie was instantly disarmed.

"My dear young lady," he said, "I've just received a letter from my wife explaining everything, and I hope you'll accept, and you, too, Mr. Harper, my most sincere apologies: What can I say? I really feel that nothing I can say will excuse my conduct."

"Please don't say anything, Mr. Oxton," said Maggie earnestly. "You were misled by evidence that might have deceived anyone. But, please—you won't mind my saying it—please be as kind as you can to poor Alice: She's so awfully sorry and—"

"Yes, yes; I'll see her at once and talk over things, and I daresay we'll get on better in the future: Good-bye. I sincerely wish you all happiness."

It was an embarrassing interview, and all felt a sensation of relief when he vanished through the doorway:

"I say, we really must be going," expostulated Dick, looking at his watch: "We'll keep everybody waiting: Come along, please."

"One moment," said Maggie, and she slipped into the kitchen, where Mrs. Perkins was washing up.

"Oh, Mrs. Perkins," she said breathlessly, "Mr. Harper tells me you've been most kind and attentive all the years he's been living in chambers, and he's quite sorry to leave you, and you must come and see us as soon as we get settled, and—and good-bye for the present."

She shook the old laundress warmly by the hand, and fled away downstairs:

Mrs. Perkins, still clasping an unwiped plate, moved slowly into the sitting-room, and from the window watched the cab rattle across the square and disappear beneath the archway opposite, and then turned away with a lump in her throat, and a mist before her eyes.

"God bless the child!" she murmured;

"I thought she had a kind face."



Boat Ahoy!

By CHARLES W. WESTRON.

Relating the consequences which attended on a girl's big mistake.

OLDMOUTH was sweltering in the sun, and Ashley Ludlow, who had been loitering away the morning, fishing in his boat, had just made up his mind to leave it and get into a decent suit of clothes, when his attention was arrested by a figure on the deserted beach. It was the figure of a girl, and she was waving her handkerchief, apparently with the object of attracting his attention:

Ashley watched her with a feeling of lazy interest. Her white dress and scarlet parasol stood out in bold relief against the dark background of cliff, and the general effect struck him as being extremely satisfactory:

"What on earth is she doing?" he asked himself.

Then a broad smile overspread his bronzed, good-looking face.

"I believe she takes me for an ordinary, common or garden boatman," thought he: "In any case, I may as well go and see," and, suiting the action to the word, he pulled a few vigorous strokes, which brought him to within speaking distance:

"Did you want me?" asked Ashley, lifting his cap.

The girl advanced to the edge of the water:

"I want to go for a sail," she said:

"You want to go for a sail?" repeated Ashley, in some astonishment:

"Yes, just for an hour or so. Take me out round the Point, will you?"

Ashley hesitated. His surmise had clearly been a correct one: She did take him for an ordinary boatman: For a moment he felt slightly mortified. He glanced ruefully at his bare feet and the sea-stained old clothes he was wearing. The girl noticed his hesitation, but attributed it to a more prosaic cause: A look of vexation crossed her pretty face.

"Are you already engaged?" she asked, impatiently prodding the sand with the toe of a dainty shoe:

Then Ashley's sense of humour, possibly aided by the pretty face, reasserted itself. He suddenly made up his mind to play the part which she had assigned to him:

"Certainly not, miss," said he, and running his boat in, he jumped out, and, standing in the water, lent her a helping hand.

"Nice day for a sail, miss," said Ashley respectfully:

"Glorious!" she agreed: "And what a dear little boat yours is."

"Yes, miss," said Ashley, "and a good'un to sail, too. You shall see. There's a nice breeze, and I'll get the canvas up."

So saying, he shipped his oars, stepped the mast, and hoisted the mainsail. Then, seating himself beside her in the stern, he took the tiller, and the boat, now feeling the breeze, began to slip through the water.

"This is delightful," said the girl. "I love sailing, and I get so little of it."

"Really, miss," returned Ashley. "Is that so, miss?"

Heresolved to round off all his remarks with a respectful "miss." He would attempt also to render them in the sleepy, sing-song dialect of the coast, but to "miss," he pinned his faith. He was not much of an actor, and he realised the fact: "Miss" must be his password. He would make "miss" trumps and play the suit for all it was worth. He did not want the girl to find out the mistake she had made. The discovery would probably upset her, and Ashley every minute began to feel more sure that he did not want to upset her:

"Really, miss," he repeated:

He stole a glance at her. She was leaning comfortably back with one small hand trailing in the water. Ashley had noticed before that the hand was small, now he noticed too the sunny curls clustering tightly round her shapely head, and the rounded contour of her face:

"I suppose you haven't been staying here long, miss?" he ventured to remark.

"No," she replied, "we arrived only a few

days ago, but we shall be here for a couple of months. My father, Captain Derwent, has taken the Grange."

"What luck!" involuntarily exclaimed Ashley, and then, feeling a pair of expressive eyes fixed on him in some surprise, "I mean," he faltered, "what luck for us boatmen, miss. It has been a precious bad season up to now."

"By the way," said Maud Derwent, "whose is that large white house, the one half-way up the hill—you can just see it through the trees—the one next to the Grange—whose is it, boatman?"

Ashley scratched his head with the peak of his cap. "The white house," he said, after a minute's quite superfluous thought, "why, it belongs to a Mr. Ludlow, miss."

"Mr. Ludlow—do you mean Mr. Ashley Ludlow?" asked Maud. "I have heard of him: Isn't he very rich, and extremely good-looking?"

"Middling," answered Ashley, who had developed a sudden interest in the set of the sail, "I mean middling rich, miss: There's no doubts as to his looks, none whatever. He's a handsome young chap, is Mr. Ashley."

"You know him well," said Maud, who seemed rather interested in the subject.

"Wonderfully well," he admitted. "Why, there's times, miss, when Mr. Ashley comes out in this very boat day after day."

"Indeed," said Maud, and then, producing a book, she settled herself to read.

The time slipped pleasantly by, and Ashley began to wonder if she realised that the appointed hour was fast expiring: Then he noticed with vexation that the wind was shifting.

Up to this time he had been letting his little craft sail freely before the wind, and they were now some miles from the shore: Ashley's idea had been, with the assistance of a small jib and mizzen, to fetch back quietly in a series of tacks, and in this programme he had not reckoned on a change of wind. He was annoyed, however, not so much that the wind should shift as that it should shift into the particular quarter which it was choosing.

The one wind that Ashley dreaded was an easterly one. From long experience he knew that, on that particular coast, even a slight easterly wind was capable of raising a lumpy, bucketing sea. And now—there was not the least doubt about it now—after dying away and coming in fitful puffs for a time, the breeze had acted up to its

reputation for fickleness, and was blowing gently from the one quarter it should have been considerate enough to avoid.

"I think we had better be going about, miss," said Ashley.

"Going about?" replied Maud. "If you mean going back, certainly not: I haven't had nearly enough."

Ashley explained the situation: "There's a bit of sea getting up already," he concluded.

"Nonsense!" said Maud.

"It's not nonsense, miss, it's quite possible we might ship a little water: You wouldn't like to get wet?"

"I'm not a bit afraid, and surely *you* can't be?" she added scornfully.

Ashley with a smile, half of amusement, half annoyance, made no reply, and another quarter of an hour passed. Then Maud closed her book and looked round.

"Why, where is Oldmouth?" she asked in some surprise:

"The point hides it," said Ashley quietly: "It's about five miles back."

"Five miles!" cried Maud: "Why, it can't be. We seem quite close to the shore: Distance can't be so deceptive as that."

"It's three miles straight in to the nearest point of the shore, miss."

A little, white-crested wave lumped heavily over the bows of the boat, and the edge of a big cloud crept over the sun. Maud bit her lip.

"I think, perhaps, we had better go about, as you call it, boatman."

With a smile Ashley rose, lowered the centre-keel, and then, resuming his seat, put down the helm:

"Oh!" exclaimed Maud, as the boat, now close-hauled, heeled over.

"Beg pardon, miss?"

"Nothing," said Maud, slightly annoyed: "What was that thing you let down in the middle of the boat?"

"That was the centre-keel, miss."

"What is it for?"

Ashley explained that it stiffened the boat, that it enabled them to sail closer to the wind and carry more canvas than they otherwise could do. "If it came on to blow, miss——"

"Isn't it blowing now?" interrupted Maud.

"Nothing like it's going to: When it comes on to blow you will see the value of that centre-keel. Why, if we were to carry this canvas without a centre-keel, we should——"

He paused:

"What?"

"Capsize," answered Ashley gravely, but with a twinkle in his eye.

Maud's face became a trifle pale:

"You're not afraid, miss?" said Ashley, with deference.

"Certainly not."

"I'm glad of that, miss."

Maud said no more, and the boat plunged onwards, but it soon became obvious even to her inexperienced eye that the wind was fast increasing in strength: Spindrift constantly stung her face: The shipping of a wave over the bows had become more than an occasional accident, and once Ashley had made shift, with an old tin can, to bale the water from the bottom of the boat: Then it came on to rain, and with the advent of this additional discomfort Maud's forced composure began to give way.

"Oh, what a long time we are taking!" she exclaimed: "We seem as far off as ever: Why don't you sail straight back?"

Ashley explained that he was sailing as straight a course as the wind would let him:

"How far have we to go now, then?"

"About four miles."

"Four miles!" cried Maud, aghast:

"That's about it, miss."

She shivered:

"You're not afraid, miss?"

The wind suddenly strengthened: The boat heeled over until the gunwale was almost level with the water: Ashley, with a grim smile, shook her up, and, as she righted, repeated his question:

"You're not afraid, miss?"

"Yes, I am," said Maud:

He looked at her, and his smile vanished, Maud was, indeed, no sight for aught but sympathy: Drenched, cold, frightened, miserable—her plight would have touched a very much harder heart than his. He took off his coat, and, murmuring apologetically that common men like himself were accustomed to bad weather, wrapped it round her shoulders.

Under any other circumstances Maud would, doubtless, have indignantly resented his action: Under these, she gratefully accepted his offer: Besides, there seemed to be a masterful way with this boatman: Maud didn't know quite how to deal with him:

"Thank you," she said gratefully, and then, for the first time, it occurred to her how lithe and strong her attendant was, what a nice face he had, and how blue his

eyes were: Why did seafaring men always have those far away blue eyes? She didn't ask Ashley the question, but she pondered over the answer: There was a lull just then, and the boat was labouring less in her course:

"Isn't it much calmer?" she asked:

Her answer came in a blinding flash of lightning: Then a squall caught the boat, and she leapt forward like a frightened hare:

Ashley looked grave: His first feeling of satisfaction at having succeeded in giving his companion a slight fright had now changed to one of genuine consternation: He looked doubtfully at the mainsail: If only he could take a couple of reefs in it—but that he realised was out of the question: He dared not leave the tiller to the inexperienced hands of Maud:

"Is there any—any danger?" she asked timidly:

"Not a bit of it," said Ashley briskly:

"No danger at all, but I'm afraid we can't fetch Oldmouth for all that."

"Can't get back?" cried Maud in despair.

"But we can do something else: We can do this: You see that spot of white a mile or so down the coast—that's Mancombe. There's a little inn at Mancombe: We must fetch that; we can do it easily; and this is no weather for a lady: You'll be drowned with the rain soon if I don't get you under shelter."

"Better the rain than the sea," said Maud, trying to smile: "Do as you think best, boatman."

They flew onward, and Ashley's face grew momentarily graver: Luckily, he was making his new goal in one long reach, and sailing the boat was simple enough. What worried him was the thought of the surf: The long, white, angry lines of breakers were clearly visible now, and, though there was an inn at Mancombe, the beach itself formed the only landing place:

Ashley knew from experience that at the best there was a rough time in store for them, and it was with considerable relief that he noticed on the beach a couple of men who had evidently marked their plight: His course, at any rate, lay clear before him: He must carry on as he was. There was no chance of lowering the sails and rowing in:

"Hold tight!" he said:

There were three lines of breakers: They took the first on the crest of a big wave, and came through the ordeal unscathed:

"Good," muttered Ashley, but they were not so fortunate at the second. The staunch little boat lurched, stumbled, and then, driven by the remorseless wind, cut her way bodily through the turmoil, to emerge waterlogged and helpless.

"It's all right," said Ashley cheerily, as they staggered on. "Hold fast, she'll do it."

She did—just. The wave that sank her flopped over her stern just as her bows grazed the shingle, and there were willing hands to help.

* * * *

Maud was seated by a blazing fire, drinking tea. The kind-hearted old dame who presided over the destinies of the Mancombe Arms had provided her with a change of clothes, and in an old, figured print dress she made a quaint, but pleasing, picture. So, at any rate, thought Ashley, as he entered the room. He had come to the conclusion that the farce had lasted long enough. He had to get Maud home for one thing, and for another he was sick of the part he had been playing.

"I am awfully sorry," he said, "that our sail should have ended so disastrously, but, if you feel as fit as I do, you will be able to do justice to these strawberries."

Maud looked up in blank astonishment. She felt very grateful to her attendant for having piloted her unhurt through what she was now beginning to consider a pleasant, if perilous, adventure, but surely he was presuming on her complaisance a trifle too much.

There was something, however, in Ashley's appearance which made her pause. He had spoken in his ordinary tones, and, though the blue serge suit he had borrowed was an old one, it was associated with spotless linen, and he looked an entirely different person from the sea-stained, shoeless man whose boat she had engaged for a sail.

"Oh, will you get yourself some tea, then?" she said at length, and, taking a shilling from her purse, she proffered him the coin.

Ashley, despite himself, flushed crimson:

Then he took the shilling and left the room: "I wonder how she means to get home," he muttered. "Perhaps she will hire me as a guide—or a lightning conductor," he added, as a particularly vivid flash lit up the dulness of the house.

Left in solitude, Maud began to feel uneasy. The increasing violence of the storm frightened her, and, before very long, her desire for companionship getting the better of her sense of shyness, she opened the door and made her way to the kitchen:

"What a frightful storm!" she said, by way of explaining her entrance:

"Yes, miss," said her hostess, "we do get 'em bad, hereabouts, but they be soon over. It isn't the first time by a long way that Mr. Ludlow here has run in for shelter. Is it, sir?"

"Mr. Ludlow," gasped Maud, in amazement.

"Why, yes, miss—Mr. Ludlow," repeated the old lady, bustling out of the room.

Maud crimsoned to the roots of her hair—then she felt herself grow pale.

"Mr. Ludlow," she faltered, "but, but—"

Then Ashley stepped forward:

"You must forgive me," he said:

"Oh, how could I?"

"If it comes to that, how could I?"

"It was entirely my fault," said Maud:

"It was all mine," Ashley insisted:

"No," he added, after a pause. "I am inclined to think you are right: It was your fault, I couldn't resist."

Maud blushed again:

"And I gave you a shilling," she said:

"I haven't forgotten it."

"But you must try to forget it."

"I shall never forget it. I shall always keep it. I shall always treasure it," he answered.

Maud blushed once more—that was the third time.

"But what, what *can* you think of me?" she murmured confusedly:

"Perhaps," said Ashley, "perhaps some day, on dry land, when it isn't raining or lightning, or thundering, or doing anything foolish, you will let me try to tell you."



Antipathies similar to that possessed by the hero of this story are not uncommon. King James I. could not bear the sight of a drawn sword, and on one occasion shook so violently that he nearly ran the point of the sword into the eye of a gentleman upon whom he was conferring the honour of knighthood. Earl Roberts, too, has an antipathy for cats. Such harmless things as roses, music, and apples have possessed a horror for some people.

One Little Red Rose. ❧ ❧

❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ By JANE HARDY.

A FEW muttered words of introduction, a bow, a smile, the writing down of initials on a programme, and they were off, floating down the room in the perfect union of two exquisite dancers.

Allison Moore, the most graceful dancer in Dublin, had always a choice of the best partners, but never before had she floated on clouds as in the arms of this tall Frenchman.

When they had been round the room once, he drew her out from the circle of dancers:

"A thousand pardons, mademoiselle," he said, "but my heart is weak and I can no dance for long. Will you sit with me?"

A faint shade passed over Allison's face. To dance with this man was one thing; to sit out and listen to his queer English quite another.

She looked up, and instantly saw that he had divined what was passing in her mind. Something in his look interested her and made her determine to be gracious:

"Why, certainly!" she said, with one of her charming little smiles that had made many a man's heart beat fast. "With pleasure!"

The grave Frenchman bowed, and led her through the conservatory out upon the terrace. He led her straight to two basket chairs at some distance, overlooking the garden. A few other couples were scattered about, but all were engrossed in their own affairs:

"You will not have too cold?" he asked gently, looking down at her in the clear moonlight. And then as she, smiling, said: "No," he dropped into silence.

Allison looked at him curiously. To

be brought out upon the terrace to sit in silence was not what she had been accustomed to—the noted Irish beauty—and yet this strange man interested her and she was content to wait his time.

At last he spoke.

"This so moonlight night," he said, "much remind me of a friend I had. He was an Englishman, mademoiselle, and he had a story: It will not—what do you say?—bore you if I speak his story?"

"Not at all," she said, with a faint smile in her eyes. Men generally brought her out here to tell their own stories! She looked up, and, meeting his grave eyes, again she had the feeling that he had read her thoughts. A faint flush came into her face, but the Frenchman did not notice it. He was looking out into the moonlight.

"It was in Africa that I meet him," he began. "I was there making a book when your war was beginning, and I so love a fight that I go with the English and write for *les journaux de Paris*. His face was pleasing to me when I first saw it. He had a very earnest and so—sensitive face. His hair was fair, just the colour that you often see on your English babies, and he had large blue eyes *comme un enfant*. *Ma foi!* he was handsome, although he had a deep—deep—*cicatrice*—on his brow."

Allison caught her breath for an instant. She was listening now, and the Frenchman, though he was still looking across the garden, felt the change:

"And," went on the even voice, "this young Englishman and me, we became big friends. We shared the same tent—when there was one, mademoiselle—and we were always together. At last one night I saw

down into the Englishman's heart: Does it interest you, mademoiselle?"

"Stories from real life always do," she answered lightly. The Frenchman bowed, and then continued:

"So one evening we were sitting all alone by ourselves over a camp fire. And the Englishman, he talk much to me, and I heard and watched his face in the light of the fire. He tell me of his mother, mademoiselle, with such tenderness and a so great reverence that I think to myself so good a son could make a good husband. And when a man begin to talk of his mother, mademoiselle, other confidences will not remain long behind. He tell me that long since a boy he had been cursed—pardon the word, mademoiselle—by a so great fear of water, and that fear had all spoilt his life. He said to me, mademoiselle, that his poor mother had been nearly drowned just before he was born, and that was how he got this fear which had caused the great grief of his life. I had always known that he had one, because when he did not work or fight, he had so sad a face."

The Frenchman made a barely perceptible pause, but Allison sat, her hands clasped tightly in her lap, her dainty face looking as if cut out in marble. As she did not speak, he went on:

"And there is a lady in my story, mademoiselle, a so beautiful lady which I think must have been—like you—and he love this dear lady. All went well until one day they were walking near a river when a little child fell in. The lady sees him first, and she calls to her lover—my friend—to go quick help the poor child. *Mais*, mademoiselle, he stood still. And the lady she call to him again in great pain for the child—and, mademoiselle, he could not move one step. And then"—the Frenchman's voice grew husky—"the poor child it was gone."

"The young lady, she was Irish, mademoiselle—like yourself—and passionate—and she turn and make him bitter reproaches. She was wearing on her breast a crimson rose he had given her. She tore it off and threw it on the ground with the one word, 'Coward!' and went away. It is a hard word, mademoiselle, '*lâche*,' and she would not hear anything he could say. Oh, mademoiselle, my heart bleed for him when

he tell me the story. His grief to have lost the child was so strong—and to have lost his love as well! So he came away to fight and forget her."

"And did he?" whispered Allison, and two tears fell unheeded on her dainty dress.

"That is in the other half of my story, mademoiselle," replied the Frenchman, watching the progress of those two little glittering tears. A great cloud rolled across the moon, and out of the darkness he spoke again:

"One night a handful of men in advance of our—er—columns, were surprised *par l'ennemi*. As they were too many men for us to kill, we had to fall back, leaving two men wounded behind. The moon was hidden behind the clouds—as it is now, mademoiselle—and my English friend, he crawl on his hands and knees and bring in one man on his back. Then he went out for the second—*mais*, mademoiselle, the moon pierce through the clouds and they fire the guns on him. He bring his man in, mademoiselle, but he was bleeding from many places." The Frenchman stopped an instant, and then went on: "When he was buried, mademoiselle, they bring to me all that was found on him—just a faded red rose."

A silence fell between them, and then the Frenchman spoke again:

"And that is why, mademoiselle, the moonlight makes me think of my friend, and I wish always that perhaps one day I might find out that lady and tell her the rest of the story. She only knows half."

"I think she would be glad to hear it," said Allison, with a break in her soft voice. She dropped her face into her hands to hide her quivering lips. The Frenchman watched her with infinite pity in his eyes.

"Mademoiselle," he whispered, "you must not have too great a grief." He stopped, and then he added in a different tone: "Here is a gentleman who look for you."

They both rose, and as the second man joined them she turned her brilliant eyes on the Frenchman:

"It was for his country?" she asked.

The Frenchman hesitated:

"I think, mademoiselle," he said, "it was for the sake of one little red rose."



This story will be complete in three instalments, and should be read by everyone who likes a really exciting detective tale. It is one of the most amazing and ingenious stories of this kind ever written, and cannot but be followed with breathless interest from start to finish.

The Disappearance * * * * * * * * *of Nicholson.*

By *CYRUS AINSWORTH.* * * * * *

CHAPTER I:

A Surprising Story.

I WAS forty-five when I made my pile. I am not going to pretend that I owed my success—such as it was—to brilliancy of intellect, or to phenomenal energy. In my case, Chance, backed by the good-nature of one or two magnates whom I was able to serve, was the determining factor.

I went to Cape Town in my twenty-third year, and got a job as a clerk. After eighteen months I moved up to Kimberley, was engaged in the diamond mines, and at forty-five I was able to retire with a fortune of sixty thousand pounds. Nothing tremendous, but enough for me. I invested the lot in British Consols, and came home to England to live on the interest.

The one person in England whom I wanted most to see again was my old schoolfellow, Jack Nicholson.

I have a few blood-relatives, of whom I was, and am, moderately fond; but Nicholson had a special niche in my remembrance. He was the hero of my youth, the dashing leader in all the schoolboy exploits that shine so alluringly with the glamour of the past. He was two or three years older than myself, and, when I went out to South Africa, he was already beginning to be famous as a brilliant young journalist.

During all those years at Kimberley I believe Nicholson was never out of my thoughts for more than a week at once. I used to wonder how he was getting on:

Now, everybody hears of the big successes in the literary world, so that, unless Jack Nicholson had changed his line—which seemed unlikely—it was clear that he had not stepped into the front rank. Still, one can be a respectable success without achieving notoriety.

Until I had actually landed in England, I do not think I had for one moment entertained the idea that Nicholson might be dead.

I settled myself in a good hotel, had a look round town, then I went in search of my old chum. I had left him on the *Evening Gazette*, but the present management knew not his name, so I was brought to a very swift halt. I learnt afterwards that he had quitted them twenty years earlier.

I returned to the hotel and considered what to do. I could think of nothing better than to write to the leading editors, which I did.

I asked each editor if his staff included a journalist named Nicholson. I described my friend as a middle-aged man, and intimated that it would be to his advantage to resume acquaintance with me.

The replies came in promptly enough, and I learnt that there were at least four Nicholsons in journalism in London, but not one of the four was the man I wanted.

I was greatly disappointed. The idea that Nicholson might be dead came home to me with considerable force. I wondered why I had not thought of it before. Very soon it became almost a conviction.

Of course I could advertise, but I shrank from it. If Nicholson were still alive, and in reduced circumstances, publicity might be very annoying to him. Or I could employ a private detective; but there, again, a little reflection told me that this might be even more cruel than advertising. For the time being, I let the matter drop.

One day I chanced to get into an omnibus at Charing Cross. Immediately opposite me a young lady was seated. She had an attractive face, and I glanced at her with some pleasure. Her age I judged to be not more than eighteen, perhaps less.

There was something in her appearance which continued to attract my regard, and by the time the 'bus had traveled a hundred yards I had discovered what it was, namely, a resemblance. She bore a strong likeness to somebody I had known quite well.

For the next quarter of a mile, along Whitehall and the approach to Westminster Bridge, I was cudgeling my brains to think who the person was that she resembled. For the life of me I could not remember. Where had I seen that face before?

The 'bus journeyed over Westminster Bridge, whither I had no desire to travel, but I was glued to my seat like one in a trance. At last my brain-racking was rewarded. Of course, it was my old friend Nicholson. My heart leapt. This girl could be no other than my old friend's daughter.

At the corner of St. Thomas' Hospital she got down. I followed. When she was fairly in the street I approached her and raised my hat.

"Pardon me," I began, "but may I ask if your name is Nicholson?"

She looked at me, surprised.

"That is my name," she replied.

"I thought it was. How extremely like your father you are."

Her astonishment deepened.

"Like my father?"

"So like him that I knew you at once. Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Henry Arnott. A quarter of a century ago—before you were born, young lady—your father and I were the best of friends. I regret to add that I have not seen him for twenty-three years."

She gave me a sad little smile.

"You will never see him again," she said gently.

My heart sank.

"It is what I feared," I replied. "Has he been dead long?"

"I don't know exactly how long, but a great many years. I was a very little child."

I gave a deep sigh. I suppose I looked as concerned as I felt, for Miss Nicholson regarded me pityingly. Presently she spoke:

"Would you like to call and see my mother? We live not very far from here. I can't take you there now, as I have to return to school. I am a pupil-teacher. But I'll give you the address, and, if you would care to come this evening, mother and I will both be at home after seven."

I accepted the invitation, of course, and made a note of the address.

Soon I found myself wondering whether the acquaintance of the daughter would compensate me for the loss of her father. She seemed a charming girl. To be sure, I had had but a glimpse of her, yet I began to long for seven o'clock, that I might see her again.

The afternoon wore away. At seven o'clock to the moment I knocked at Mrs. Nicholson's street-door. It was opened by the young lady, who gave me a smile and a handshake before ushering me into a neat little sitting-room.

"This is Mr. Arnott, mother."

I looked at the mother with some curiosity. I saw a thin little woman, sharp-featured, with sunken cheeks. Her age would be about forty. She was tidily dressed, but neither her clothes nor the furniture of the room suggested a fat income.

"My daughter tells me she met you in an omnibus," said Mrs. Nicholson.

I confirmed the statement, and commented on the likeness which had enlightened me as to the young lady's identity. While I was saying it, I noted that there were well-marked points of resemblance between the mother and daughter, particularly about the hair, the hands, and the chin. There was also one noticeable difference. The mother's face suggested no reserve fund of amiability; her daughter was the picture of sunny good-temper. Much to my regret Mrs. Nicholson presently dismissed her from the room.

"Nelly is a good girl," she said to me, when the door had closed, "in spite of her resemblance to her father."

I sat up, startled.

"In spite of—" I exclaimed.

The little woman shook her head.

"My husband treated me very badly."

I could only look my incredulity. I could not pretend to be sympathetic. A conventional lie was quite beyond me.

"I see you don't believe me," she said; "but it is quite true. He ill-used me cruelly. When Nelly was three years old, he deserted me."

I tried to pull myself together. The little woman did not look as if she were lying; besides, what object could she have in lying to me, a stranger? But this sort of conduct did not sound at all like my old friend.

"When were you married?" I said.

"In eighty-five. Nelly was born in October, eighty-six."

I had left England in eighty-one.

Nicholson's marriage had not taken place till four years later.

"Didn't you get on well together?" I said. It seemed a stupid question, after what she had just told me; but I had to say something, and I was mentally bankrupt at the moment.

"We got on as badly as possible," she replied, with much emphasis. "A man more unreasonable, more impossible to please, can never have breathed. And before we married he was just the opposite, just as easy-going—well, you wouldn't have thought he could speak a cross word. Oh, but I was deceived in him."

I took a long breath. This was not at all what I had come to hear, and, indeed, I was very far from accepting it. My feelings were a mixture of indignation and disappointment. I began to prepare for departure. But I had a question or two to put first.

"How long has your husband been dead?"

"He is not dead."

"What?" I exclaimed, fairly astonished.

"Hush!" she said. "Nelly believes him to be dead. When he deserted me, fourteen years ago, I was too proud to accept the position. I changed my address, and passed myself off as a widow. I told all my friends that my husband had had an illness, and that he went to Malvern for his health, and died there. He is supposed to be buried at Malvern. I did not hear from him for some months. Then he sent me some money. I knew it came from him, by the writing on the envelope. My necessities obliged me to accept it, though the first food I bought with it nearly choked me. After that, he sent me money again—oh, quite often. Never a line of writing with it. Not so much as a how do you do. However, I had no scruples about using the money. I had a daughter to support."

"When did you hear from him last?"

"Three weeks ago."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed. "Can it be possible?"

Mrs. Nicholson smiled. It was not a pretty smile.

"Why have you told me all this?" I said.

"Really, Mr. Arnott, I hardly know. It has been a pleasure to speak my mind freely. I saw all along that you hardly believed me. Perhaps that helped me to be quite frank."

"But you have talked it over with other people?"

She looked as though she would deny it. I shook my head.

"You must have. It wouldn't have come so glibly from your tongue if it had been a secret of fourteen years' standing."

"Very few people know anything about it," she said. "Nelly doesn't, and I don't wish her to."

"You intend to keep her ignorant that her father is alive?"

"Certainly."

"Do you know your husband's present address?" I said.

Mrs. Nicholson regarded me with a certain grim satisfaction.

"I neither know it nor want to know it," she said.

* * *

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Nicholson's Advice.

WELL, of course, it was no business of mine. That was the obvious end of all my reflections. But I couldn't leave it at that. I wanted to make it my business.

Nicholson was, or had been, my one particular friend, and I couldn't dismiss his affairs from my mind. I had already spent some time and money in a fruitless search for him, and now that I had his wife's assurance that he was alive, my longing to see him grew greater than ever.

Mrs. Nicholson's story had contained one or two rather puzzling points. The woman herself had not impressed me favourably, and I could have understood (which means that I could have forgiven) Nicholson's desertion of her. Few sensitive men can endure a nagging tongue. I felt that I, myself, would prefer not to live with Mrs. Nicholson. The chief difficulty in her story was the money difficulty.

In my recollections of him, Nicholson had never been a rich man. Now, by deserting his wife, and supporting her in a separate establishment, he would not have diminished, but rather increased, his expenses. I did not see how he could have afforded to do it.

That he was not a very successful man seemed clear, for his line was journalism and literature, in which success is synonymous with notoriety. I felt that this was a mystery to which I had no key.

I passed a wretched, sleepless night, thinking the whole matter over, and,

naturally enough, I rose late the following morning.

In the afternoon I went again to Mrs. Nicholson's. The lady received me without surprise.

"I thought you would come again very soon," she said. Oddly enough, I liked her for saying it. I felt a momentary sympathy with the person who had understood me so well.

"I want to ask you a few questions," I said, "if you will be so kind as to answer them, and not resent my impertinence."

"I like it," she answered promptly. "I am a truthful person myself, and so are you. I saw that the first moment I set eyes on you. You can ask as many questions as you like. If there are any of them I don't want to answer, I shall know how to keep my mouth shut."

"Have you any objection to my trying to discover your husband's whereabouts?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Perhaps you would like to see him again yourself?"

She smiled. "I'm not anxious," she said. "Don't think that I shrink from it. If there were any good reason for a meeting between us, I should not raise obstacles. But I don't desire to see him. Have you any reason, apart from the sentimental one of old friendship, for wishing to find him?"

"None whatever," I answered, somewhat surprised by the question. I was more surprised by what followed.

"Then if you will allow a woman—I imagine that you have not a very high opinion of women, Mr. Arnott—but if you will allow a woman to give you a word of advice, I should say: 'Let sleeping dogs lie.'"

I stared at her. She was sitting forward on her chair, with her hands clasped on her knees. She did not appear to be looking at me, but rather through me, into some deep beyond where my mind could not follow. However, her words were plain enough:

"Sometimes I have the strangest thoughts of my husband. You know he is a very clever man." At this I nodded my agreement. She went on without appearing to have noticed me: "When I think of him, sometimes I have a vision of him sitting in high places, clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day. He is not merely clever, he is thoroughly selfish. He did not desert me

for my own good, as the saying is, but for his gratification.

"The money he has sent me during the last ten years has averaged about one hundred pounds per annum. Now, my knowledge of his character tells me that, where he has spared a hundred for me and Nelly, he must have spent at least a thousand on himself. To do otherwise would be wholly foreign to his nature.

"If he were a poor man none of his money would come to us. That he sends us any proves him to be rich. The little that he sends is conscience-money. It shows that there are moments when he loathes his present way of living. What that may be I do not know. God knows. It is enough for me that God knows. One day there will come a reckoning. I wait for that reckoning."

"You would suggest," I said, speaking as gently as I could, "that your husband has abandoned literature for some more remunerative profession?"

"More remunerative, in a worldly sense, yes. Whether more profitable, I know not. 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'" Her voice rang loud and clear as a bell.

But this was a kind of speculation that did not tempt me, and I made haste to turn the conversation.

"Can you give me any assistance in my search for your husband?"

She seemed to wake up with a start.

"What sort of assistance?"

"Have you kept the envelopes in which your money arrived? If you have, you might give them to me."

She shook her head.

"I may have the last one. I'll see presently. Usually I throw them into the fire."

"I'm sorry for that. They might have afforded me a good clue. Did you ever notice the postmarks on them?"

"Yes, frequently. The majority of them were E.C."

"Posted in the City, evidently."

"Yes. Sometimes they were W.C. Once it was Kilburn. I remember noticing that one."

"Recently?"

"Oh, no. Three or four years ago."

"H'm. Not much indication in that. Of course, a letter can be posted anywhere. Was the writing on the envelope always that of your husband?"

"Invariably. I couldn't mistake his

handwriting. I'll see if I can find you the last envelope. You are determined to continue your search, I suppose, in spite of what I've said?"

"My dear lady, you've said nothing to dissuade me. If, as you suppose, your husband is a rich man, he ought to remember his wife and daughter more generously. It may be my duty to tell him so, when I find him."

"I don't think you'll find him easily. If he wanted us we should have heard from him long ago. If he means to remain in hiding, it will take a clever man to ferret him out."

"I quite agree with you, and, with your permission, I intend to employ a private detective, the cleverest one I can get hold of."

"I suppose I can't make you feel what I feel," she said, "and I daren't try to hinder you; because I might be doing wrong. You may be God's chosen instrument in this matter, and it is not for us poor mortals to question His divine wisdom. My feeling is that my husband is doing something wrong; mind, I don't know what it is, but I feel that it is something very wrong, and I fear it will be an ill day for him, and for others, when his doings are brought to light."

Before I could argue the matter further, the door opened, and Nelly came in. I have not often been more glad to see anyone. How fresh and charming she looked. And her resemblance to her father was so very strong.

Seeing him again, as it were, in this beautiful girl, revived all my old feelings. I felt that I wanted him again, quite as earnestly as ever. Nothing could have dispelled the gloom created by Mrs. Nicholson's remarks more effectually than did her daughter's beauty.

I was invited to stay to tea, and, of course, I accepted. I wanted to make friends with Nelly. I felt that I had been robbed of my opportunity the previous evening, and I was delighted to have a chance to make it up. I believe I succeeded. I know that I spent a couple of hours with thorough enjoyment.

We talked of Nelly and her teaching first. Then Nelly wanted to hear stories of her long-dead father, and, of course, I told those which presented my old friend in the most amiable light. Even Mrs. Nicholson had to share in our enthusiasm, and was presently won over to softer

thoughts of the man whom she had long regarded as more of an enemy than a friend.

After tea, Nelly played the piano, and, at my request, sang a few songs. Some were modern, and pleased me not; but one was a sweet old song of long ago—

Just a song at twilight,
When the lights are low,
And the flickering shadows
Softly come and go.

It rolled back the curtain of years, and set my heart throbbing as it had not throbbed since I was a boy.

* * *

CHAPTER III

The Private Detective

THERE was staying in the same hotel as myself a gentleman whom I had regarded one or twice with a little curiosity. He was a fine-looking, well-built man, with a very capable head. From his facial expression and manner of speech I judged him to be a barrister.

On the morning following my second visit to Mrs. Nicholson I got into conversation with this gentleman, and I endeavoured, as unobtrusively as possible, to draw him on the subject of detectives.

He divined, somehow, that I had a secret reason for trying to draw him: Seeing this, I threw myself on his mercy, admitted that I wished to consult a private detective, and asked if he could recommend me to one.

"Is it a delicate matter?" he asked.

"I think I ought to say 'Yes,'" I replied. "I should like to employ a tactful man, and, of course, a discreet one."

"Private detectives are famous for their discretion. An indiscreet detective would soon be one of the unemployed. However, the best man I know is Nick Latozzi. I have to see him in about an hour on business of my own. If you like to come out with me I'll introduce you to him."

"Thanks, very much," I said. "I shall be greatly obliged."

"Perhaps I ought to warn you," said my new acquaintance, "that his fees are a bit steep."

"Oh, that's all right!" I exclaimed. "I want a good man."

An hour later the introduction was effected. I found Mr. Latozzi a tall, thin, sharp-featured man, who walked with a stoop. He looked fairly clever, but not

aggressively so. However, I had no doubt my hotel friend was correct in describing him as a good detective.

Mr. Latozzi informed me that he was full up at the moment, but he hoped to be at liberty towards the end of the week, when he would wait upon me at the hotel. With that I had to be content:

Finding myself reduced to idleness, I cast about for something to do. I could think of nothing better than to take a train to Burford Bridge, and climb Box Hill.

It occurred to me that it would be a beautiful thing to have the company of Miss Nicholson, but I knew that she was chained to her school, so I dismissed the idea. I took a hansom to London Bridge, bought the *Times*, and got into the train. The guard blew his whistle, and off we went:

I opened my *Times* at the Parliamentary page, and found a verbatim report of a big speech by the Home Secretary. This I began to read:

Growing interested, I read with close attention to the end of the speech. Then I laid down the paper.

It was a clever speech, of a kind rarely delivered in the House of Commons. It appeared that a murder had been committed some two months previously. The murderer had been caught, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death. But the evidence was entirely circumstantial, and an appeal for mercy had followed. To this the Home Secretary had responded by commuting the sentence:

As a rule, a Minister's reprieve causes less agitation than would be caused by withholding it; we are all for mercy nowadays; but about this particular murder were one or two brutal features which had stirred the public imagination, to the prejudice of the murderer:

People were asking why he had been reprieved: Of course, there were opinions on both sides, and the old question of the ethical aspect of capital punishment had been raised again:

One or two mass meetings had been held, culminating with a question in the House, and a reply from the responsible Minister: He took his stand mainly on the inconclusive nature of circumstantial evidence. His speech proved him to be a merciful man, and also a logical thinker. His points were made in the most clear-headed manner imaginable:

Now, it was not the case, though that was interesting, nor the arguments as to the

value of evidence, though they were also interesting, that captivated me. I sat thinking about the speech for precisely the same reason that I had sat looking at Nelly Nicholson in the omnibus, viz., because I detected a resemblance.

The Home Secretary's clear-headed reasoning reminded me irresistibly of the manner of a debater whom I had known: I saw from the *Times* that the Secretary's name was the Right Honourable Henry Greville, M.P. I knew nothing about him, so I made a mental note to look him up as soon as I returned to London. But I forgot him completely before I had climbed half-way up Box Hill.

I stayed on the top of Box Hill quite two hours. I felt as though I could never tire of gazing at the beautiful view, and listening to the rustling of foliage, the song of birds, the chirping and whirring of insects, and all the rustic noises that are borne on the breeze:

Hunger drove me down in the end. I dined at the Burford Bridge Hotel, and returned to town in the evening, with the pleasing consciousness of having spent a day more satisfactorily than had been the case for two or three weeks:

I felt a good deal brighter the next morning when I awoke:

Immediately after breakfast I was surprised by a call from Mr. Latozzi. This gentleman explained that, although he would not be at liberty before the end of the week, he would like to make notes of my requirements at once, so that he could get to work at the earliest possible moment, without having to lose time by calling on me then, and perhaps finding me out:

Well, of course, I was glad to see him, and I acquainted him at once with the facts about Nicholson, so far as I knew them: He asked me a lot of questions which I was quite unable to answer:

The net facts, when he had them down in tabular form, did not strike me as particularly cheering; on the contrary, they made me feel rather hopeless as to the result of the search: But Mr. Latozzi assured me that they held the germs of several indirect clues, and he managed, before leaving me, to inspire me with considerable confidence in himself and his methods:

In the evening I paid another visit to Mrs. Nicholson, and took with me, albeit with some trepidation, a small present for Nelly, consisting of a chatelaine bag of chain silver, which I had seen in a shop-

window in the afternoon, and had not been able to resist buying:

I felt very shy of offering a present to Nelly in this early stage of our friendship: I did not know how she would take it, nor whether she would accept the gift: I felt that I should be very disappointed if it were refused; however, I hoped for the best.

It came off all right: Nelly accepted the little present with evident pleasure, and thanked me very prettily for my kindness. Mrs. Nicholson essayed to reproach me for wasting my money; but I assured her that I had no need to study economy, and she appeared to be satisfied.

Conversation turned on the subject of the reprieved murderer.

"The papers are making a great stir about the Abbey Gate crime," said Mrs. Nicholson: "What do you think about it, Mr. Arnott?"

"Do you mind telling me your own opinion," said I:

"I think the man ought to be hanged," she answered promptly: "It was a brutal murder, and I believe in the old Levitical law: 'An eye for an eye—a tooth for a tooth.' I can't understand why the Home Secretary has let him off."

"You don't think justice should be tempered with mercy? I'm sure Miss Nelly takes a less severe view."

Nelly blushed, and took refuge in an evasion:

"I think," she said, "I would rather be hanged than endure penal servitude for life."

"Ah, that's a difficult question: We don't know how sweet life is till we are on the point of losing it: As regards the Home Secretary's decision, Mrs. Nicholson, perhaps I can throw a little light on the matter: I read a full account of his speech in yesterday's *Times*, and he made it quite clear to me that he did not consider the man's guilt conclusively proved."

"But the jury found him guilty."

"On circumstantial evidence only: An appeal was forwarded to the Home Office: The gist of Greville's reply was simply this: History has afforded so many instances of men unjustly condemned on circumstantial evidence, that he would not undertake the responsibility of refusing the appeal: He made a fine speech on the subject: Whether he was right or wrong in this particular instance I couldn't pretend to say; but I can understand his attitude, and I sympathise with it."

Mrs. Nicholson hesitated:

"Of course," she began, "if there was any doubt, naturally he would be reluctant to condemn the man; but why did the jury think him guilty?"

"I presume the jury were satisfied with the evidence: The Home Secretary wasn't. But he wouldn't have interfered if he had not been asked: Afterwards, he had no choice: The responsibility was put upon him, and he had to do his best."

"You talk as though you were defending him," said Nelly:

I laughed:

"Well," I said, "I admired his speech."

And as I spoke I remembered that I had intended looking up the account of him in "Who's Who." Later in the evening, when I had returned to the hotel, I did look it up: This is what I found:—

Greville, Rt. Hon. Henry Francis Stanislas, M.P., represents North Westeshire, born 1858. Educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. Served in India under Lord Roberts. Left the Army to enter political life. Under Sec. Home Dept. in Lord Salisbury's administration. Home Secretary and Cabinet Minister in present Government. Married 1895, Evelyn Gladys, second daughter of Lord Middlehurst.

For all the significance it conveyed to me it might as well have been written in Sanscrit: I knew nothing of the Rt. Hon. Henry Francis Stanislas Greville, nor of Evelyn Gladys, his wife: I was not educated at Harrow and Sandhurst, nor did I serve in India under Lord Roberts:

Now, why, I asked myself, should the composition of a printed speech by an aristocratic stranger remind me of the logical reasoning of a debater whom I had known in years gone by? I could not remember even who the debater was: Obviously, it was only a chance resemblance.

The succeeding week passed slowly and uneventfully: I paid two or three visits to the Nicholsons: My friendship with Nelly continued to make fair progress, and I found myself not merely tolerating her mother, but actually growing to like her:

After a week had elapsed I received a visit from Mr. Latozzi:

"Hallo," I cried, "is it you?"

The thin detective smiled:

"Why, yes, Mr. Arnott: Your job turned out a fairly easy one."

I was surprised:

"You don't mean to tell me you've found him already?"

"I've found out all about him, sir: Not that there was much to find: Mr.

John Nicholson, journalist, who used to write for the *Evening Gazette*, left his wife in March, 1890. So much you knew: He took lodgings in Burton Crescent, W.C., and lived there quite openly, in his own name, for twelve months. During that year he continued his journalistic work: In April, 1891, his landlady, Mrs. Lawson, gave him notice: He had got into the habit of coming home intoxicated: Then he moved to a small working-man's flat in Walworth, a two-roomed flat, which he furnished, and in which he lived alone, doing his own cooking: Probably he got most of his meals at restaurants: From that date he began to go downhill rapidly: In January, 1892, he died."

"Died!" I exclaimed: "Oh, nonsense, Mrs. Nicholson has heard from him recently."

"Impossible, sir!" said the detective, quietly but firmly: "There is no doubt about his death: An inquest was held: I turned up the papers of that date, and read the account."

"Are you sure it was the same man?"

"I'm sorry to distress you, sir, but there really isn't any room for doubt: The dates all tally: That the John Nicholson of Burton Crescent was the journalist you knew is established beyond dispute, and the flat in Walworth was taken by a John Nicholson on the same day that your John Nicholson left Burton Crescent: It does not seem possible that they were two men: They must have been the same one."

Well, of course I didn't believe it; but it was of no use to say so:

"What did he die of?" I asked:

"Heart failure: According to the medical testimony, he had a naturally weak heart, made worse by excessive drinking."

* * *

CHAPTER IV:

A Clue at Last.

I PAID the detective for his services; services which appeared to have been faithfully rendered, however little satisfying the results were to myself:

Mr. Latozzi furnished me with a written report of the facts he had ascertained, and at the earliest possible moment I laid this report before Mrs. Nicholson: She pooh-poohed it at once, with a degree of incredulity that exceeded my own:

"It's moonshine," she said: "My

husband isn't dead: Why, it is only a month since I had a remittance from him: Where does the money come from, tell me that?"

"The detective seems to think that the payments had been continued by someone else," I replied:

"But who else in the world would be interested in continuing them?"

I shrugged my shoulders:

"Of course," I said, "if your husband died possessed of any means, he must have made some testamentary disposition: The money may have been left in the hands of a solicitor, in trust for yourself and your daughter."

"Would that be legal?"

"Upon my soul, I can't tell you: I think it would depend on how it was done: Mind, I'm only making a suggestion: I don't accept the detective's conclusions: I think he has gone on a wrong track."

Mrs. Nicholson shook her head vigorously:

"No solicitor in Great Britain would dare to act so irregularly: In the first place, I should have been properly informed of my husband's death."

"Yes, I'm inclined to agree to that: I think you've put your finger on a weak spot: If the matter had been left with any reputable solicitor, he would have proceeded regularly: It seems fair to assume that. And the first step would have been to write you a formal letter, explaining the circumstances."

"Besides, the envelopes were always addressed in my husband's writing."

"You are quite sure about the writing?"

"Positive: Absolutely positive."

"You think there's no possibility of error? Don't be offended with me: The detective has undoubtedly gone to a lot of trouble in investigating the matter, and I shouldn't care to tell him he is wrong without having some pretty sure grounds to go upon."

Mrs. Nicholson jumped to her feet, and spoke with great emphasis:

"Mr. Arnott," she said, "I am as certain that every envelope containing money was addressed by my husband personally as I am that I am alive."

"Thank you," I replied: "I hope I haven't offended you."

She smiled:

"Not at all."

"That settles it, then: Your husband is alive: He must be: And this precious report is worth no more than waste paper."

I looked at it contemptuously, feeling strongly inclined to tear it up. The lady read my thoughts.

"No, don't destroy it," she said, with a smile, "if you feel that you must go on looking for my husband, and, to tell the truth, I shouldn't like you to drop your search now: I must confess I'm a great deal more interested in it than I thought I should be. Well, why not take this report as a basis on which to work? Be your own detective for the future, begin where the other man began, find out where he went wrong, and, perhaps, in distinguishing the false scent, you may discover the true one."

"That's not half a bad suggestion," I admitted:

"Think it over," said she: "By the way, I have two torn envelopes for you. I found them yesterday. One is the last that arrived, about a month ago; the other is about two years old."

I looked at them with considerable curiosity: The most recent one, which bore the postmark of London, E.C., was an ordinary commercial envelope, rectangular in shape. The other was a small, square one, made of distinctly better paper. Its postmark was London, W.

I looked at the addresses, and seemed to see a difference in the writing. Possibly it was only superficial. The most striking difference was in the letter N. On the commercial envelope the word "Nicholson" commenced with a printed capital: On the square envelope the ordinary capital N of copper-plate caligraphy was used:

"I've thought of another point," said Mrs. Nicholson: "If the payments had been made by a solicitor, they would have come at stated intervals; on quarter-days, most likely."

"Quite true," I replied: "Did they reach you at irregular intervals?"

"Oh, they came anyhow. The longest interval I remember was five months; but three months was not at all unusual: Once, on the other hand, I received two payments in one month."

"That sounds rather irregular. Was the amount always the same?"

"By no means. It has varied from five pounds to five-and-twenty. The most usual amount was ten pounds—if I may employ the word 'usual,' where everything has been unusual."

I laughed at this, and Mrs. Nicholson joined in the laugh.

"Well," I said, "I can't make much of these envelopes: You've no objection to my showing them to the detective?"

"Are you going to consult him again?"

"I haven't made up my mind. I may do so: You know, I can't help thinking him a capable man, although he appears to have made a hash of the case so far. Your suggestion that I should be my own detective has its merits; but, frankly, I have no great confidence in my own ability in a job of this kind."

"Well, Mr. Arnott, if you don't mind throwing away your money, I suppose it isn't my place to prevent you, even if I had the power. But I'm very much afraid you are throwing it away. My own impression is that my husband, who is a very clever man, and quite a match for the cleverest detective on earth, has no intention of showing himself, and will take good care not to be found. Even supposing you do find him, he may very well turn round on you and say—what business is it of yours?"

"My dear lady, if I can only find him he may say what he pleases. I can easily explain my interest in him."

I went straight to Latozzi's rooms, and to my delight I had the luck to find him in:

"Sorry to ask you to re-open a case which you regard as closed," I began, "but Mrs. Nicholson tells me she is absolutely positive that her husband is alive."

"Women are always difficult to convince," said Latozzi: "Perhaps she was really fond of him."

I laughed.

"I don't think affection is the root-cause of her disbelief. However, look at these." I handed him the envelopes. "You can see their dates from the postmarks. Mrs. Nicholson assures me that each was addressed by her husband personally."

The detective examined both envelopes minutely. I sat and waited while he bent over them with a microscope. Finally, he pronounced judgment:

"I'm not a handwriting expert," he began, "but, speaking with all caution, I should give it as my professional opinion that these envelopes were not addressed by the same person."

I felt staggered.

"Well," I said, "I noticed one or two differences myself; but I do assure you, Mr. Latozzi, if you had heard Mrs. Nicholson as I did—the firm positiveness of her manner——" Here I stopped, a little

embarrassed. The detective was looking at me quietly. His amusement was obvious.

"I've heard women give evidence," he said, "many a time."

"You think she's mistaken?"

"My dear sir, what can I say? I think these two envelopes were addressed by two different people. Suppose we assume, for the sake of argument, that one of them was addressed by the late Mr. Nicholson—how are we to determine which is the one?"

"Frankly, Mr. Arnott, I should advise you not to trouble. Of course, with me business is business; but I am reluctant to draw any client into unnecessary expense. My personal opinion is that Mr. Nicholson is dead. If, after that, you care to employ my services further, they are at your disposal."

I thanked him and bowed myself out:

"This is infernally puzzling!" I said to myself. To be quite truthful, I didn't know what to think. Was Nicholson dead, after all? Then, who the dickens was it that kept on sending anonymous remittances to his wife?

For the moment I gave it up. I dropped a note to Mrs. Nicholson, saying that I would call on the following day (which happened to be Saturday), and that I should be delighted to take Miss Nelly to view the art treasures of the Wallace Collection if she would go with me.

The following morning the postman brought me a pretty little note of acceptance from Miss Nelly herself.

After lunch I called for her in a hansom:

"Do you know," said she, "I've never ridden in a hansom before. How delightfully they go."

"It's very preferable to 'bus riding," I replied.

"It's much more expensive," said Nelly. I laughed.

"Are you worrying your pretty little head about the expense I'm putting myself to? If you are, please don't."

"How can I help? You are sure to spend a great deal more than is necessary. I think you're rather extravagant." She softened the last remark with a smile.

"Well," I said, "it's considered bad form to brag about one's means, so I won't do it. But if it will comfort you at all, I can tell you quite truthfully that I don't live at the rate of one-third of my income."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Then I apologise. It was rude of me to call you extravagant."

She looked at me with pretty, pleading eyes, and I smiled my forgiveness.

"Really," I said, "unless I were to behave like an absolute ass I shouldn't know how to spend my full income in London. Why should I go to dearer hotels when I'm quite satisfied with what I've got?"

"That would be extravagant," said Nelly.

"It would be foolish. The truth is that a man who spends the best years of his life in business learns better how to make money than to spend it. And acquisition is more satisfying than distribution."

"Oh, no! That's a direct contradiction of the Sermon on the Mount. It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"Pardon me, I said satisfying; not blessed."

"So you did. Still, I think you meant pretty much the same thing." And she laughed merrily. I had to join her.

"Well, perhaps I did. But who lives up to the Sermon on the Mount? Have you ever known anybody? I haven't."

She puckered up her brow:

"That's a dreadful thing to say. Surely there are some Christians in the world?"

"Heaven forbid that I should question it. But, being in the world, their Christianity must on occasion give way to expediency."

"Of course. But need the occasions be numerous?"

"I'm afraid they are. You see, the world is governed by expediency, not by religion. But, my dear child, who taught you to argue?"

The remark had no sooner dropped from my lips than it seemed ridiculous to me. Confound it, how blind I was! Of course, she had inherited her father's talent.

Jack Nicholson had been the keenest verbal fencer I ever encountered. And, swift on the heels of this reflection came another, like the sudden ray of a searchlight in a dark place. It was Nicholson's power of debate that had been brought to my mind by the printed speech of the Home Secretary.

For a moment I sat dumb. I felt overwhelmed by the sudden discovery. Jack Nicholson was not merely alive, he was in the employ of the Right Honourable Henry Greville. He had prepared the great speech. At last I had got a clue!

(Next month will be told how the clue worked out.)

STORIES IN VERSE.

Any readers who would like to recite these poems in public should apply for permission to do so to the Editor, *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The Dispatch Bearer.

By CHARLES PARKINSON.

The story of a soldier's gallant action.

"My lad, the end is well-nigh come,
The shadows darken fast;
Ere break of day my storm-tossed life
Will be for ever past.
But one thing more remains for me,
And then my work is done—
To speed thee on a dangerous task,
My loved and only son;
Now listen—few shall be my words—
A message must be borne,
Ere daylight breaks, unto the King
Encamped at Carlingthorne.

"Of all the men within these walls,
But you and I can tell
The trackless path across the moors,
The way by hill and dell;
And only one who knows them all
Can hope to make his way,
Through rebel scouts and Roundhead dogs,
To Charles ere break of day.
And I had meant to ride this ride,
But now I mount no more.
That rebel bullet speeds me fast
Unto another shore.

"Take thou my blessing, thou, the last
And dearest of my race;
The danger of the task I know
That thou wilt gladly face:
For Church and King our house has fought,
And suffered, and has died;
And though my heart cleaves fast to thee
I send thee from my side.
Ride hard, ride straight, whate'er befall
I know thy constancy;
Thou'lt bring thy message to the King,
If life be left to thee."

The stripling pressed his father's hand,
And kissed him once again;
Then turned and went without a word,
His heart wrung sore with pain.
They gave the message to his hand,
And mounting up with speed

He passed from the Castle gate
Upon his trusty steed;
One last look towards that room of death
Where shone a taper's light,
Then turning to his dangerous quest
He vanished in the night.

Adown the darkened village street,
Out on the silent moor,
Now up the dell, now past the wood,
His onward course he bore;
Amid the silence of the night
Is heard the hurrying tread,
Past the old Church at Baynham Creek
Where sleep the quiet dead;
There lie full many of his race,
And there his mother lies;
A muttered prayer is on his lips
For her, and him who dies:

His way he takes, past ford and brook,
On through the dreary night,
Now straining onward up the hill,
Now down in headlong flight.
The moorland flies his charger's hoofs,
The pass is almost won,
But five more miles, good fortune speed,
And then his work is done.
On either side the rugged slopes
Arise, a grim, dark pile;
And, without pause, he dashes on
Into the dark defile.

"Halt! who goes there?" Then close at hand—

"Halt! whither do ye ride?"
The way is barred by mounted men,
They close on either side.
A moment's pause, a lantern gleams
On faces bold and stern;
They throng around, no need to ask
The news they fain would learn.
One glance at them—one glance at him—
The certain tidings bring
That they are for the Parliament,
And he is for the King.

A moment's pause, the lantern's gleam
On cap and corselet played,
Bre through his heart who held it passed
Young Bertram's ready blade:
'Mid shouts and curses, loud and long,
'Mid clash and ring of steel,
They struggle in the dark defile,
Or from the combat reel:
Now right, now left, his good sword swings,
As, 'mid the clang of blows,
He crashes through the plunging steeds
And clears his struggling foes:

* * * *

A sentry pacing to and fro
The bridge at Carlingthorne
Halts suddenly, alert and grim,
Amid the gathering dawn;
The distant sound of dropping shots
Strikes on his listening ear,
And e'en while the alarm is given
Draws near and still more near:
With speed the horsemen mount, and forth
Across the bridge they ride,
And onward o'er the moorland, where
The sounds of strife still guide.

The veil of morn rolls slowly back;
They gaze, and now they see
Pursuer and pursued appear
From out the misty sea.
Now right and left the rebels wheel,
And for their lives they ride;
A few more strides—the horsemen reach
Young Bertram Tempest's side;
And horse and rider, almost spent,
And spattered thick with gore,
Reel onward to the friendly host
Like swimmer to the shore.

His hand still grasps his shattered blade,
His life is ebbing fast,
What matter! now the goal is won,
The dangerous ride is past.
He raised his weary, blood-stained head—
"Hark ye, good sirs, I bring

From General Neil at Gaythorne Tower
Dispatches for the King."
Then back unto the bridge they hie,
And as they gain the town,
The King amid his train they meet
Come slowly riding down:

Before the Royal Charles he halts,
But, as he drew the rein,
Young Bertram's charger sank to earth
No more to rise again:
He staggered from his dying steed,
And knelt before the King—
"These letters, sire, of urgent need,
From General Neil I bring."
And as he told his midnight ride
Men held their breath, and swore
That never such a gallant deed
Was done by youth before.

With kindling eye the King hath heard
The tale young Bertram told—
"Fit action of thy house," he said,
"Thy sire was true and bold.
On many a field he led the charge,
No truer friend had I,
And much I grieve that now at last
He in my cause should die.
God rest his soul, in fight so brave,
In council always wise;
And as for thee—kneel—thou art Knight!
Sir Bertram Tempest, rise."

The young knight rose, then knelt again
And kissed the Royal hand—
"I thank thee, sire; I would my blade
Were still at my command:
For thee and thine right willingly
We ever drew the sword,
And to have borne my message through
Is e'en my best reward.
My sight grows dim"—his shattered brand
He raised, and loud did ring
His last cry, ere he sank in death—
"God save, God save the King!"

* * ANOTHER TRAGEDY. * *

BY ALBERT E. BULL.

'Twas in the train he eyed the maid,
And she returned his glance;
He longed for some dark tunnel's shade,
His osculating schemes to aid,
By giving him a chance.

A dragon fierce frowned on the pair,
An aunt of that dear girl's,
Who met her eye with icy glare—
And chilled his blood with frigid stare—
An aunt with cork-screw curls.

The tunnel; hush, they kiss; yes, hark—
No fear true love can daunt.
But, horror! Lo, that female shark,
Has changed the places in the dark,
And he has kissed the aunt!

Snooker's Flying Machine.

* * * * * By A. J. A. X.

Young Snooker was a person of inquiring turn
of mind,
He dabbled in inventions of a highly novel kind;
The only thing that worried him was just the
trifling fact
That none of his contrivances were ever known
to act.

He made a clockwork pussy, but it wouldn't
catch a mouse,
A patent cooking oven, too, that set fire to
his house.
His automatic postman went to pieces in
the legs,
His indiarubber hen would not lay india-
rubber eggs.

At last he turned his genius to conquering the
air,
The way he solved the problem would have
made an eagle stare.
He felt the plan he'd hit upon must elevate the
name
Of Snooker to a pinnacle of everlasting fame.

Said he: "The earth is spinning—so say
scientists, at least—
Some hundred miles an hour or so from west
towards the east,
In fact, the spot I'm standing on, 'tis strange
but surely true,
Will be out in America within an hour or two:

"So all that's necessary is to rise into the sky
A mile or two above the earth, and watch the
clouds roll by,
And when the broad Atlantic has rotated
'neath the sun,
Drop gently back to land again—the thing's
as good as done.

"The earth we know is highly charged with
electricity,
And bodies similarly charged repels in marked
degree.
This mighty fact I'll utilise in manner quite
unique,
I'll travel round to China and return within a
week.

"Electric force will neutralise the attraction of
the earth,
Reaction bear me westward to a land of
unknown worth.

Santos Dumont will be turning green with
envy at my plan,
I'll make my fortune taking week-end parties to
Japan."

He built a copper cylinder with room to sit
inside,
And lined it well with rubber so that he might
safely ride;
A big balloon he filled with gas, and fixed his
car below,
The copper he connected with a powerful
dynamo.
When everything was ready for his elevated
flight
He climbed into the cylinder, and screwed the
lid on tight;
The ropes that held him captive were released,
and into space
Went Snooker soaring skyward at a most
prodigious pace.

* * * * *
The claims of strict veracity compel me to record
Our hero's ingenuity received but scant reward.
For, whether electricity leaked out of the
balloon,
Or he had not bethought him of the influence
of the moon,

The earth continued circling, as it's ever wont
to do,
Despite his calculations, then—poor Snooker
circled too!
Misfortune more appalling, when he wanted to
descend,
The valve-string hung above him—and he
couldn't reach the end!

Astronomers, I beg you, when you scan the
starry sky,
If a satellite of curious shape you happen to
descry,
Pray call it Snooker Beta, and immortalise
the name
Of the latest martyred aspirant to aeronautic
fame.

* * * * *
To scientists endeavouring the air to navigate,
The moral of this moving tale I humbly
dedicate.
When success in steering through the clouds
triumphant you attain,
Be sure you plan a safe device—for coming
down again.

True Detective Stories. * *

* * * * * By M. F. GORON.

(Late Chief of the Paris Detective Police.)

Edited by ALBERT KEYZER. * * * * *

These thrilling stories relate true incidents in the career of M. Goron—in fact, they are actual extracts from the pages of the diary which he kept while engaged in the duties of his profession. M. Goron has taken the very keenest interest in preparing the stories for press. They now, for the first time, appear in print. Each story is complete in itself.

VIII.—A Dramatic Holiday.

WHILST I was chief of the Detective Police I remember to have taken but few holidays. Many a time had I packed my trunk in the hope of spending a week or a fortnight in a secluded spot among peaceable citizens, but, somehow or other, Fate ordained that the train that was to carry me away should start, leaving me and my luggage behind:

"One of these days you will collapse," my friends used to say, and, like all evil predictions, theirs came true. I had been fearfully busy. There had been an avalanche of crimes, and the strain had begun to tell on me, to an obligato accompaniment of headache, sleeplessness, and other pleasant symptoms. With a mistaken sense of duty I tried to cling to my post, but when I saw I had the medical faculty also against me I gave up the battle, and promised to take a rest:

I longed for a forlorn spot beyond the reach of railways, telegraphs, telephones, and other civilised institutions. I even knew of such a place in my native Brittany; but, instead of going there at once I kept asking myself whether it was not too close to Dinard, and, consequently, within easy access of the dreaded tourist. I hesitated and was lost:

The following day, as I was walking down the Rue de la Paix, a voice like thunder called out my name. I did not see the gentleman who gave forth that volume of sound, but I knew that in the whole of France only one person possessed such an organ, my old friend Stanislas Tilon, a captain in the merchant navy: I saw him wave his umbrella from the opposite side of the road, and went across to meet him:

Good old Stanislas, who stood six feet three, had not only a tremendous voice—everything about him was big: He seized

both my arms in his lion grip, and, having knocked my stick out of my hand, and my hat half off my head, he conducted, or rather, dragged me to the Café de la Paix:

"Fancy meeting you!" he roared. "I came back on Tuesday last, and am off again the day after to-morrow. But what's the matter with you? You look out of sorts."

"The fact is," I said, "I am not very well. The doctors say I must take a holiday, and I cannot decide where I shall go."

Down came Stanislas' fist, upsetting all the dominoes on the table next to ours.

"You want a thorough holiday? I'll give you one. You may bless your stars you met me. We are running a regular line of steamers from Bordeaux to St. Louis, on the African coast, stopping at Madeira and Teneriffe. They are capital boats, carrying only a small number of passengers: I am in command of the *Gambia*, the most comfortable of the lot: You'll be my guest, and the blow will put you right in no time: We are only going as far as Teneriffe, so that you will be back in three weeks. I'll give you one of the two deck cabins, and you'll be as happy there as a king. We have a splendid cook, and as nice a lot of passengers as you'd wish to meet: Don't sit there shaking your head. It's all settled: I'll take you away from your criminals into a fresh atmosphere. Here's luck to our trip!"

Stanislas' proposition tempted me. My shaken nerves clamoured for a rest, such as I knew I should find on the high seas; and, after a few objections, immediately overruled by my friend, I accepted his kind invitation.

The following day, at two in the afternoon, I arrived at Bordeaux and went straight on board: Stanislas welcomed me with

unaffected joy, and after an excited and whispered discussion between him and the steward, the latter took my valise to the deck cabin on the starboard side.

I then started inspecting the floating establishment that was to harbour me during the next three weeks, and felt myself getting cross.

Venerable the *Gambia* looked, yet in no way commanding respect. I saw at a glance that she was trying to hide her age beneath a thick coat of paint and varnish, like a woman of sixty who imagines that her dyed hair and juvenile get-up will give her the illusion of youth. I abhor these painful exhibitions, and felt for this aged steamer the same pitiful contempt I have for juvenile old ladies.

Our steamer was an ancient tub, and, no doubt, a bit of a roller, yet she looked comfortable enough, and in order to shake off my first unfavourable impression I made for the companion to have a look at my fellow passengers. Stanislas had already told me we numbered twelve, and I was just beginning my tour of inspection when a tall, rather masculine girl, with a short coat and skirt, high collar, and a soft, rakish-looking hat, stopped in front of me.

"I'm Miss Hebe Smythe," she said, with an amiable smile.

I took off my cap:

"You are Monsieur Goron, I think?"

I bowed.

"I am," she continued, "correspondent of the San Francisco——"

"No, no, my dear lady," I cried, "please do not finish your sentence. I know what is coming: I know it only too well. I have the greatest regard for journalists, although they occasionally honour me with too much attention. But I have taken shelter on this old steamer, where I hope to find rest, and expect to be safe from interviews."

And I walked away with a misgiving that I had been a little rash in accepting Stanislas' invitation.

The steamer was crowded with people who were saying good-bye to their friends; some were partaking of lunch with them, so that it was impossible for me to know who were the passengers. At four o'clock, however, the hawsers were cast off, the engine-room bell began to tinkle its "stand-by," and we had started on our voyage.

The rain was coming down in torrents as I descended to the saloon to join my shipmates. Several people were sitting at the

long tables, some writing, others reading, and I noticed one, a pronounced German type—his name was Von Winter—drinking champagne by himself and playing patience.

Before the dinner hour had struck Stanislas had introduced me to everybody. Besides the before-mentioned German and the lady journalist, there were M. Van Vloot, a rich wine importer, with an aquiline nose, and the shortest legs I have ever seen belonging to a man of his size; his wife, a stout lady, afflicted with toothache; Mr. Aylmer Knowles, a Scotchman, with an expressionless face, accompanied by his wife and daughter, the latter a sweetly pretty girl; Father Glass, a priest; Monsieur Waskywicz, of no defined nationality, with comic eyes and fat cheeks, blue with the razor, who turned out to be a comedian; Dr. Lopez, an oculist; and Señor Gonzales, a South American Spaniard, a handsome man, whose temper seemed to be considerably ruffled.

I guessed that our loquacious captain had been talking about me, for not only the passengers watched me with curiosity, but the crew stared at me open-mouthed. As there was a piano in the saloon, and none in the smoking-room, I decided to make the latter my headquarters.

"Hallo, old chap," roared Stanislas at me, "how do you like your hotel? Where do you want to sit at table? Near that pretty Scotch girl, I suppose?"

"Since you ask me," I replied, "you can place me between the German and the lady with the toothache. Neither of them looks talkative, and that just suits me."

"Poor Goron," said my friend, giving me a slap on the shoulder that sent my book overboard, "wait a couple of days, and you'll see the good the breeze will do you."

"It looks like clearing up," I remarked, for the rain had stopped.

"Don't build on that, sonny: The glass has tumbled, and I expect after midnight we'll have a fine dance. They'll all be in bed by that time, I hope."

Stanislas had given me the seat of honour at the table on his right, but he was too busy to put in an appearance. On my other side was Señor Gonzales, still very upset, and growling to the steward something I could not hear about his cabin. Like every first meal on board an ocean steamer, ours was a terribly dull affair.

The German, who kept on drinking champagne, was the first to address me with the question:

"Do you play poker?"

"I do not," I replied.

"Why not?" asked Gonzales.

"I never gamble. Why do you ask?"

"Because we might have a game in the smoking-room to-night: I thought perhaps you'd like to join."

"I will join you in a smoke," I said, "but not in the game: I never play."

"I'm awfully fond of a spin at poker," put in M. Van Vloot, "and so is Becky if her tooth does not worry her: How is your tooth, Becky?"

"Thank you, Sol, I feel much better: I daresay a little game would just put me right: And I don't mind the smoke."

Mr. Knowles, who had not opened his lips over dinner, remarked in a rasping voice:

"A sea-trip without poker is like a dog without a tail: I'll play, too."

"I'll also take a hand," said M. Lopez:

"I gamble on principle," grunted the comedian, "it's the only principle I have," a joke which sent Madame Van Vloot into a fit of imbecile laughter:

As soon as dinner was over there was a general rush for the smoking-room, and in the saloon remained only the priest and Mrs. Knowles, dozing in their chairs; Miss Smythe busy writing; and Miss Knowles, a book on her lap, deep in thought, with a smile on her pretty face:

For a long time I paced the deck, enjoying the fresh air and the stillness around me, and having wished Stanislas good-night, I decided to turn in, when curiosity prompted me to see how the gamblers were getting on:

Madame Van Vloot was standing at the door of the smoking-room very much out of temper:

"Don't you play?" I asked:

"I have played," she replied in a solemn tone, "and I have lost my money. And so has Sol, and so has that German gentleman, and so has Mr. Knowles, and so has the actor with the funny name: We have all lost our money. Señor Gonzales raked it all in: What luck that man has! I never saw anything like it."

As I entered the room Gonzales passed me. He was tired, he said, and wanted to go to bed: I saw the other players looking at one another, and the atmosphere seemed charged with voiceless currents of thought:

"He cleared us out very nicely," at last remarked Mr. Knowles.

"He did," repeated the others in chorus:

"I'll tell you what I think——" began Van Vloot in an excited tone:

"You needn't express your thoughts," cut in Mr. Knowles, "for we all think the same thing: As for me, I don't intend to play again with that gentleman, and I wish you all pleasant dreams."

I was beginning to feel more contented: Our old steamer was not so black as she was painted, and beneath her somewhat too fresh exterior she hid a few sterling qualities in the way of comfort: I lit another cigarette and resumed my walk: But a change had come over the weather: It was blowing very hard, and the waves rolled in mountains under a sky of lead: In less than a quarter of an hour a gale broke, and heavy seas swamped the deck:

"You'd better turn in," said the first officer, "it will get worse during the night."

I followed his advice, although sleep was out of the question:

The wind howled, and the water crashed against the side of the steamer with deafening noise. It was anything but soothing to the nerves: Towards five in the morning I dozed off, and may have slept for half-an-hour, when I was roughly shaken and someone called out my name. I felt the wind blow on me through the open door, and there stood Stanislas with the first officer behind him: Both looked pale, and I saw it was not from cold:

"Come at once," shouted the captain, "we want you!"

Having forced me into my trousers and coat, he took me to the cabin on the port side, facing mine: The storm had abated, but there was still a heavy sea, and Stanislas gripped my arm to steady me: The steward stood outside, as if on guard: Stanislas pushed him aside, opened the door, and said:

"Look at that!"

I recoiled with horror: The cabin was bespattered with blood:

"Great Heavens! Whose berth is this?" I asked:

"Gonzales," replied Stanislas:

"But where is he?"

"Gone—disappeared."

"Disappeared, you say?"

"We can't find a trace of him: An hour ago the steward, fancying he heard him call, opened the door and nearly dropped with fright. He at once came to me, and, whilst I sent him to every cabin to account for the passengers, I mustered the crew: Only poor Gonzales is missing: Do you

mind helping me in this business, Goron? I am so distressed I do not know what course to take."

"All right, old chap," I said, "I did not come here to hunt criminals, but I will do what I can."

I made a careful examination of everything in the murdered man's cabin: His watch was on a small shelf near the bed, on the top of some bank notes and gold—probably his winnings of the night before: A pocket-book stuffed with notes was lying next to it, also his scarf, in which a valuable diamond pin was stuck.

Robbery evidently had not been the motive of the crime.

"Did not Gonzales have a grey ulster?" I asked.

"Yes, he had," replied my friend, "and I do not see it here. I'll have a search made for it; and if it is gone it will be rather strange."

"No, not so strange as you think," I said. "I fancy I can account for its absence."

"What is it?" cried Stanislas excitedly. "What do you make of it?"

"You will know that in a moment: You must now take all the valuables and seal them up: In the meanwhile I will stay here and make a closer inspection."

When everything had been removed from the cabin, and the door locked, I said:

"And now I want to look at the crew."

At my request every man stripped to the waist, but although I carefully examined their arms and necks, I could not detect the slightest scratch or bruise of recent date: Nor, when I overhauled every article of clothing and linen they possessed, did I find any bloodstains. At their own request I subjected the officers to the same treatment: I next questioned officers and men, who had been on duty between eleven o'clock the night before and four in the morning. Nobody had seen or heard anything suspicious.

"What do you make of it?" asked Stanislas.

"Some of the facts are plain enough: Gonzales' throat was cut with a sharp instrument—probably a razor. He was lying on his right side, with his face to the wall."

"How can you tell that?"

"From certain marks of blood on the wall. The cabin was dark when the murder was committed, for the electric

light was turned off. The man lost a quantity of blood, as the bed bears witness. There was no struggle: Had there been any in that narrow space, the objects lying about would have been disturbed."

At that moment the steward came to tell us that the ulster had not been found.

"I expected this," I said. "The murderer, to prevent himself from being bloodstained, took the precaution of wrapping up the body in the ulster before pitching it overboard. The dark night, and the sea washing the deck during that gale, helped him in his work."

"Have you heard of the scene at poker last night?" my friend suddenly asked.

"I have. Did they play high?"

"Yes. From what I gathered, Von Winter and Lopez lost a big amount, and Waskywicz, the actor, also came off badly."

"Do you suspect Gonzales of not having played a fair game? They threw out some unpleasant hints."

"I have known Gonzales for two years. Once before I had him as a passenger, and this is the first time I heard of such a thing. Yet one can never be sure of anybody. To think that such a crime could be committed on my good old steamer!"

It was eight o'clock, and none of the passengers had yet appeared on deck, probably owing to the weather. For, although it was not blowing hard, the sea was very rough and our steamer rolled tremendously.

"I will finish dressing," I said, "and, in the meantime, you can have a talk with the passengers. I daresay they all know by now what has happened. I will join you in the saloon."

When I came in I beheld a curious spectacle. Madame Van Vloot lay in a swoon on the sofa, and her husband was holding a smelling bottle to her nose. All looked terror-stricken, with the exception of the priest, whose clear eyes expressed intense sorrow, and the lady journalist, who watched the proceedings with interest, probably with a view to "copy." They all sat far apart, eyeing each other with suspicion: Stanislas stood erect at the head of the table, and had just left off speaking. A silence fell upon the assembly when they saw me, and Mr. Knowles said:

"M. Goron, the captain has told us of the awful catastrophe that happened in the night, and he has informed us that you have kindly consented to give him the benefit of your experience to inquire into the matter

before we reach Madeira: We are anxious to give you all the assistance we can."

I then questioned them all in turn, but they knew nothing: With the exception of Von Winter none of the passengers had left their cabins during the night: As to the latter, he stated that at two in the morning, feeling very hot, he had stood for a while on the stairs leading to the saloon, without having seen or heard anything suspicious.

Half-an-hour later, as I went towards the smoking-room, one of the sailors asked me to come to the captain's cabin: I found Lopez there:

"M. Lopez," said Stanislas, "wants to ask you something."

"M. Goron," began Lopez, "did Von Winter mention to you a violent discussion he had with M. Gonzales after the game?"

"No, he did not."

"When I went to bed Von Winter was alone in the saloon reading. I was just beginning to undress when I heard a noise of people quarreling. I opened my door, walked towards the saloon, and saw Von Winter gesticulating, apparently in a great rage. I listened, but could not catch a word they said: It only lasted a minute or so, and I saw Gonzales walk away shrugging his shoulders."

"Have you any idea why Gonzales went to the saloon?"

"He must have gone there for his writing-case, for he had it in his hand."

"Did you, or anyone else, refer to this to Von Winter?"

"No: He is very reserved, in fact, rather unsocial; and since he came on board he has hardly conversed with anyone."

I went in search of the German, and found him smoking his pipe right aft.

"You had," I said, "a dispute with Gonzales last night. How is it you never mentioned this to me?"

He turned red, bit his lip, and then said:

"I ought to have told you, but I was ashamed to do so: I played like a fool, and lost a lot of money—more than I can afford: I then had an idea—and the others had it, too—that M. Gonzales had—well, not played a fair game: I was too annoyed to go to bed, and sat alone in the saloon reading when he walked in: I am sorry to say my temper got the better of me, and I accused him of having cheated, whereupon he flew into a fearful rage, called me a scoundrel, and said he would have the matter out with me this morning:

You can imagine how shocked I was when I heard what had occurred: I suppose this story has, by now, gone the round of the steamer, and, to judge from the way my fellow passengers look at me, they have settled it among themselves that it is I who murdered M. Gonzales: I shall remember this trip!"

And, without waiting for what I might have to say, he replaced his pipe between his lips and resumed his walk.

Von Winter's last statement proved correct: He was boycotted, and when, after dinner, I went to the captain's cabin, Stanislas expressed his opinion that the case against the German looked suspicious.

"Do you mean to tell me seriously," I asked, "that you suspect Von Winter?"

"I say he was the first person I thought of in connection with the crime; and by following that track we might get at the truth: Why do you look so surprised?"

"Because I wonder how you can be so blind to facts."

"What facts? No new ones have come to light so far as I know. This morning we find Gonzales' cabin empty. Everything shows that he was brutally murdered, and——"

"That his murderer is still on board."

"I mean to say that——"

"His murderer is still on board."

"Why do you keep on repeating that?"

"Because you make light of the most important feature of the case. You may knock out of your head the idea that Von Winter played a part in that awful drama: I cannot prevent the passengers from finding him guilty, but, fortunately for him, they cannot hang him. I have done some reconnoitring, and have come to a strange, yet conceivable conclusion: I think I have found my way to the mystery, but the key to it is still missing."

"Then you have a clue?"

"No, a theory, which at times is better than a clue. This much, however, I can tell you: When a man commits a crime of that sort his first thought is to escape; and in this case the murderer knew he could not get away, and that he would have to remain with us fully four days until we reached Madeira, which would give us ample time to find him out. Now we come to the motive of the murder: Robbery is out of the question, for none of the valuables appear to have been abstracted: Revenge? Gonzales would have known he had a dangerous enemy on board, and he did not

even bolt his cabin door. The bolt was intact and had not been forced open. Unless, therefore, you believe that losing at poker can turn a man into an assassin, you will agree with me that this diabolical business is the work of a madman."

"You may be right. But who can be that lunatic?"

"There is where my theory comes in."

The steward happening to come in told us for the fifth time, how, when at four that morning he brought the captain his coffee, he fancied he heard someone call out, which caused him to look into Gonzales' cabin. A thought suddenly struck me.

"Steward," I called, "at dinner last night I heard M. Gonzales whisper something to you about his cabin, and he seemed upset; what did he want of you?"

The steward glanced at the captain and did not reply.

"It is all right," said the latter to him, "you can go. I will explain the case to M. Goron."

"Goron," he stammered, "I am sorry you found that out. The truth is I had a little trouble with Gonzales, and you were the innocent cause of it. A few months ago when Gonzales traveled with me on this steamer he had the starboard cabin, and he booked it again this time. Yesterday afternoon I saw the glass fall rapidly, and not knowing how long the bad weather might last, I ordered the steward, as you were my guest, to give you that cabin, where you would be more comfortable. I forbade him to mention this to you, and made him explain to Gonzales that a mistake had been made, and that this cabin had been retained by you long in advance. Gonzales was very much annoyed. He never left off abusing the steward and refused to speak to me. Poor fellow! I am grieved I upset him."

"You double-barreled idiot!" I shouted. "Why did you conceal this from me?"

"Goron—I say——" gasped Stanislas.

"Great Heavens! To think that of all people, you, Stanislas, should have been walking about with the key of the mystery in your pocket! It seems fantastic!"

"I—had—the——"

"Yes, you have been playing the fool's part in this affair. How long before I came on board did you do that shuffling of cabins?"

"About an hour, I should say, and——"

"And everybody on board knew the day before that your friend Goron had the cabin on the port side?"

"Most likely, but——"

He stopped, stared at me wildly for a few seconds, and caught both my hands.

"Goron, my dear old friend," he cried, with a sob in his voice, "I see what you are hinting at. It is too horrible to be true."

"I see you have grasped my theory," I said, "and I agree with you that it is a sad affair. Yes, Stanislas, it was I whom the murderer had marked out, and your changing those cabins probably saved my life. But, at what a price!"

For a while we sat in silence.

"I suppose you have by this time spotted the murderer?" asked my friend.

"Yes. I suspected a certain party from the very start: But it is getting late, and for many reasons it would be unwise for me to act to-night. To-morrow morning I will bring the culprit before you, and you will then understand everything. Good-night."

"You don't think I'll let you sleep in your cabin to-night?" exclaimed Stanislas. "You'll share mine."

Knowing it would be useless to argue with him I gave in. Before retiring to rest I went to the saloon to see how the passengers were getting on, and could hardly repress a smile. They had organised a kind of vigilance committee among themselves, and two of them watched in turns, with special injunctions to keep an eye on Von Winter. I thought it best to leave them alone.

"And now," I said to my friend the next morning, "we will reconstruct the drama and take action. I warn you, however, that we have to be circumspect, for we have to deal with a crafty man, crafty because he is insane. He is one of your crew."

"Do you mean to say I have a lunatic among my ship's company, and never knew it?"

"How do you know he is not mad? If all the lunatics at large were locked up, the Paris streets would be empty. Now, please follow my reasoning: When I arrived on board I strolled about, amusing myself taking stock not only of the passengers but of the sailors, when I came across a man with a very dirty face—one of your stokers—who had a curious way of narrowing his eyes to a slit when he spoke. I also noticed he had a slight limp."

"That's Comtat," said Stanislas.

"Had I been in harness this peculiarity might have presented itself to me in the way of a problem; but here, resting from my

labours, I confess I did not even give it a thought: Yesterday morning, however, after we made that awful discovery and you and I went down to the engine-room, this man Comtat was leaning half-dozing against the wall, and seeing me he started. It was not the normal start of the person suddenly awakened from a slumber; it was just a trifle more, enough to arouse my suspicion: The problem being now thrust upon me I had to solve it, and having made certain that I had arrested this man some years ago for attempting to murder one of his fellow workmen, I felt convinced it was he who killed the unfortunate Gonzales in the belief that he was dispatching me."

"Was it vengeance?"

"Vengeance? No, my friend: A discharged convict will turn on one of his former pals who betrayed him: But have you ever heard of a criminal wreaking vengeance, as you call it, on the judge who sentenced him, or on the governor of the prison who kept him under lock and key? I know only of two such cases, and both times it was proved the assailant was mad: And now, please, send for the chief engineer."

"M. Séguier," I said to that gentleman, "I want to talk with you about Comtat. How long has he been with you?"

"About eight months. He came to me from a Dutch steamer, with an excellent certificate."

"Have you ever noticed anything strange in his manner?"

"No."

"But he drinks, I suppose?"

"Ah, there's the trouble! I heard from the other stokers that Comtat had smuggled several bottles of absinthe on board, and, although I searched everywhere I cannot detect the place where he secreted them: When he is on duty he is sober, but after he retires to his bunk he absorbs, I am afraid, a quantity of liquor. My one complaint against him is that his memory is so bad, and this I attribute to the influence of drink."

"I quite agree with you, M. Séguier," I replied. "In the meantime I beg of you to keep a careful watch on him."

"I understand, M. Goron: Do you want to see the man now?"

"No. Send him to me at midday."

An hour later I was sitting in the smoking-room, thinking of my coming interview with Comtat, and pretending to listen to one of

Miss Hebe Smythe's wonderful yarns, when someone shouted my name:

"You are wanted at once in the engine room, sir."

As I climbed down the iron ladder, sinister shrieks came from below. The captain and our young doctor were bending over the prostrate engineer, bleeding from an ugly gash in the forehead, whilst half-a-dozen men were holding Comtat, who was foaming at the mouth, and uttering unearthly yells.

M. Séguier, it appears, had discovered where Comtat hid his absinthe and had taken possession of the stock, whereupon Comtat, in a violent passion, had hurled an empty bottle at the engineer's head and had tried to grab his throat.

M. Séguier's wound fortunately was not dangerous, and the doctor took his arm to conduct him upstairs. The moment Comtat caught sight again of the engineer his frenzy returned:

"You hound!" he howled: "You thief—I'll be quits with you: I'll cut your throat and pitch your body overboard like I did to the other man! Yes, over you'll go, you thief!"

He grew so violent that they had to tie his hands and feet, and put him in a safe place, with two men to guard him. When he became quiet I went to see him, but he seemed disinclined to talk.

"It's a very bad attack of delirium tremens," remarked our doctor to me, "and, as it not infrequently happens, the tremor is hardly perceptible. Absinthe, more than any other spirit, will produce these results."

"Do you think this is his first attack?"

"It is impossible to say: A long time will sometimes elapse between the different attacks."

Towards the evening Comtat was seized with a worse fit, when he described the murder scene in all its ghastly details: At the same time he told how he had watched me come on board, and there and then made the determination to take my life, and until he saw me the morning after the murder was convinced that the man he had killed was myself.

When we reached Madeira he was handed over to the authorities, and I returned the next day to Paris by an English steamer *viâ* Southampton.

My holiday had come to an end:

(Next month will appear another of these enthralling stories—"The Lotus Flower.")

The Mollification of Jabez Tite.

By MARY L. PENDERED.

The story of how a wife made a new man of her husband.

WHEN David Brown, the builder, died, his old friend, Jabez Tite, genuinely tried to mourn, but his grief was tempered by a certain degree of hopeful expectation. That expectation was not fulfilled, and the temperate grief of Jabez gave place to intemperate bitterness and disappointment:

"Who would ha' thought," he lamented sadly to his wife, "that, after all these years, David would turn agen me and give his last order to a stranger? It's no good your telling me, Martha, as it's the family as are to blame. David was not the one to leave such an important matter to others, and you may depend upon it he arranged it all beforehand, like any sensible man. It was getting on and being made a Hurban Councillor as done it. He thought as I weren't good enough—that's what he thought. But I never would ha' believed it o' David—me and him having been old pals ever since we went to school together. It only shows what sinful pride and vainglory will do."

Jabez was a dumpy little man, with a chubby cast of features betokening a cheerful disposition. He lived in a small house on the Wainbridge Road, in Slowborough. Beneath his name, over the door, the words "Monumental Mason," advertised his line of life, if this were not sufficiently indicated by the variety of tombstones that decorated his front garden:

It was a very tiny garden, and the tombstones seemed to jostle each other, but to Jabez there was no domain in the world more worthy of pride, for he was one of those true artists who love their work and labour at it with never-ceasing enthusiasm. Nothing could make him happier than an order for a headstone, and if he were permitted to give his genius range in the matter of doves with spread wings, crosses, or fancy designs of any kind, his bliss was supreme:

It may be imagined, therefore, how great were the shock and pain his vaulting spirit suffered when he heard that the order for his old schoolfellow's gravestone had been given to another monumental mason:

At first his wife Martha, a chirpy, bustling little body, as cherub-faced as himself, but of stronger mind, thought the shock would soon pass off and that her man would presently recover his normal cheerfulness; but she was to find out her mistake:

Jabez brooded and brooded over his disappointment, till all peace and comfort fled the cottage, and the daily meals, to which she had always looked forward as pleasant little episodes between working-hours, became, instead, silent and funereal repasts, grievous to be borne:

She rallied him, she lectured him, she begged him to throw off the mantle of gloom; but in vain: Jabez looked more glum after each of her attacks, and his appetite failed as she had never known it to fail before:

When, one evening, he refused to touch a delicious dish of pig's trotters that she had stewed for him to their tenderest point, the poor little woman was quite in despair: But the worst was to come:

She received a thrilling shock the next morning when she went into the back yard to hang out a few clothes she had been washing: For upon a new stone, facing her, she read the following inscription:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
JABEZ TITE,
MONUMENTAL MASON,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON —

and there the wording ceased, as if waiting for the date to be filled in by a ghostly hand:

Mrs. Tite shuddered violently, and clutched at the clothes-line to support herself, for her knees began to tremble beneath her. Gathering herself together, she went into the house and sought her husband, who was gloomily munching his "ten o'clock" by the kitchen fire.

"Jabez!" she demanded excitedly, "whatever is the meaning of that thing I see outside in the yard?"

"What thing?" he muttered, not daring to meet her eyes.

"That gravestone with your name on it

Ain't you got more sense, at your time o' life, than to go tempting Providence like that? You ought to be ashamed of yourself—that you ought.”

Jabez put a large chunk of bread and cheese into his mouth and did not answer for a few moments. Then he mumbled:

“In the midst of life we are in death,” and went on munching.

Martha was quenched. She had positively no words to utter.

Jabez heaved a deep sigh, took a draught of beer, and added:

“There's nothing like being prepared, Martha, and I ain't long for this world. I've felt it a-coming on for some time, a sort o' weak feeling, and I don't mean as anybody shall give the order for *my* headstone to another man.”

The concentrated bitterness of this remark showed the wormwood and gall in which his spirit still writhed.

Martha gazed at him piteously, helplessly. He did not look ill, his cheeks were ruddy as usual, though they had sunk a little with his constant frown; his voice was strong and rasping, and he showed no sign whatever of imminent decay. Yet, she felt, with the instinctive tact which even simple souls may possess, and which no woman is complete without, that it would lacerate his feelings frightfully if she exhibited any scepticism as to his delicate condition.

When she found speech, therefore, it was to say, in a subdued tone:

“I'm very sorry you feel that way, Jabez. Perhaps I'd better go for a doctor?”

He shook his head mournfully.

“No good, my woman. Physic won't cure me. I'm past that. After all, at my age, over sixty, a man can't be sure of anything in this life, and us Tites never was a long-lived family. I seem to be going the way of old Uncle Ben, and nobody ever knowed just exactly what was the matter with him. It's as well to be on the safe side, and I don't want you to have no worry after I'm gone, old gal.”

This last speech reduced the little woman to tears.

“It's too bad to talk like that, Jabez!” she sobbed; “you didn't ought to do it—that you didn't. And I don't care what you say—it's downright wicked and sinful to carve your own name on a tombstone while you're alive; it's tempting Providence, that it is—and if the Lord takes you it will be your own fault, not His—so I tell you—

for you've as good as asked to go. Oh, dear! oh, dear!”

Jabez had not seen her cry for many years, not since their child died, in fact, and he moved in his seat uncomfortably; yet the sight elated him a little within, and cheered the gloom of his soul. Here was someone who valued him, if David Brown did not, someone who appreciated his sterling qualities.

He comforted her by saying that he really felt a little better, and promised faithfully not to add another word to the tombstone, though he had thought of a beautifully appropriate text to put at the foot of it, namely:—

“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.”

But in spite of his promise, Martha remained uneasy in her mind all day, and at night, as she lay awake in bed, the thought of that gravestone haunted her.

At last she could bear it no longer, and a definite resolution shaped itself in her mind. She determined to efface those dangerous words which had for her a superstitious terror. So at one o'clock a.m. she rose stealthily, dressed herself partially in the dark, and stole downstairs. There was an old horn lantern in the scullery which she lighted, and, unbolting the back door, crept out into the yard.

It was with a great shrinking that she approached the stone, which looked at her gruesomely menacing in the bluish light of the moon's last quarter. But with heroic effort she lifted the lantern till its yellow gleam fell upon the obnoxious words; and she heaved a great sigh of relief to find the date still unfilled in. For strange fancies had preyed upon her soul. She had more than half-expected to find that an invisible hand had carved the date of her husband's death in the stone.

After hunting in the tool-shed for chisel and hammer, she set her lantern on the low wall that divided the yard from that of her left hand neighbour's, and, glancing about her fearfully to see that no one witnessed her deed of darkness, she began to scrape gently at her husband's name.

The Tites had no neighbours on the right, and their yard, which should have been a garden, was flanked by a side street running down to the main road and bounded by a low wall. The street led, at its other end, to a large private house, standing in its own grounds, and from this house, at just upon

two o'clock, a dark form came swiftly running towards the town, past the Tites' cottage.

At the low wall the dark form stopped abruptly, arrested by the light of the lantern, and stood still to gasp:

"Is that you, Mrs. Tite?"

Martha gave a suppressed scream and instinctively hid the chisel behind her back, without answering. To think of anybody being down that way so late! Such a thing was almost unprecedented, for the people who lived at the big house, an old gentleman and his daughter, were early birds, and generally locked up for the night at nine o'clock:

"Oh, Mrs. Tite, is that you? Do come here a minute: I'm in such distress."

The word "distress" brought the kind-hearted soul to the wall instantly:

"What is it, ma'am, what is it?" she asked, in alarm:

"My father has had a seizure. I heard him fall and ran in. My cook is on her holiday, and the other girl is almost frightened to death: I came out to see if I could find a policeman, or anyone, to fetch a doctor. Oh, he may be dead before I can get aid."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Martha, in horror: "Here, you just go straight back, ma'am, and I'll go for the doctor. Get some water hot for his feet at once. I'll send up anyone I meet."

She did not stop to fetch her bonnet, but fled down the road as if pursued by fiends, while the lady of the big house returned to her stricken father. For Martha Tite was a neighbourly, kind soul, and all thought of her own anxiety and her husband's sinful tempting of Providence had vanished, lost in her sympathy with a fellow-creature in distress:

It was three in the morning before she crept back into bed and lay on the brink of it, fearing to wake Jabez, who was snoring healthily: She had fetched the doctor to old Mr. Massom and rendered what assistance she could to the lady. Now she shivered with the chill that death casts, for death hovered over the big house, and its owner could not live to see another sunset:

"There's someone been scraping at my headstone," said Jabez, coming in from his work next morning with a purple face, "and using my tools to do it: One o' them brats next door, I expect: Just let me get at him!"

"It wasn't no brat, Jabez; it was me," declared Martha valiantly: "And I done it to save your life, and maybe your immortal soul: If you ain't got no proper sense o' religion and decency, I have, and so I tell you. If you want to carve anybody's tombstone, for practice, you'd better do mine: It 'ud only be murder instead o' suicide, and it wouldn't fret me half so much: But I tell you plain, as fast as you carve it, I'll scrape it out."

Jabez was so unaccustomed to any show of authority or temper on the part of his cheery little wife, that he gasped in amazement and could not utter a word: But he punished her in a way of his own that was quite successful: He sulked for a whole day, and then took to symptoms, which he called "symtims."

He had a "symtim" of heart complaint in the morning, a "symtim" of lung complaint in the afternoon, and grave "symtims" of liver complaint at night:

Each time one of these came on he lay on the horsehair sofa and groaned till he nearly rent the heart out of her body: And the next day he declared himself too ill to get up and work:

She fetched the doctor, who, clearly perceiving there was nothing the matter with Jabez, declared he had got a chill, and a few days in bed would not hurt him: For he knew his patient pretty well, and was therefore aware that to assure him of being in sound health would probably throw him into a fever through sheer opposition:

So poor Martha coddled him and purred over him, as loving wives will, and Jabez began to think he really was not long for this world:

But then something occurred to change the whole aspect of affairs:

It happened that Martha, on her way down to the town a couple of days later, met Miss Massom, in deep mourning, coming up:

"Oh, Mrs. Tite," she said, stopping and holding out her hand, "I am so glad to meet you, for I've been quite ashamed of myself: I've never yet thanked you for your great kindness and assistance that night—that dreadful night when my poor father——" she struggled with her emotion and went on—"when I was in such dire need of help: I don't know what I should have done without you, and I do hope, if ever I can do anything for you in return, you will let me know at once."

Martha gave a gasp, overpowered by the force of an idea that had been germinating in her mind ever since she had stood, with the whole town, watching the obsequies of the late Mr. Massom. Now was her time, she thought, now or never, and, being a brave little body, she seized her moment:

"Oh, ma'am," she cried, clasping her hands nervously under her well-worn black mantle, "if I only might—but I don't like to mention it so soon after—though it's seasonable, in a way of speaking—and yet——"

"Don't be afraid," said the spinster lady kindly; "tell me what it is, if I can do anything for you?"

Then Martha plunged:

"It's just this, ma'am"—she spoke quickly—"your poor father will want a headstone, and Jabez 'ud do it as reasonable as anybody, and better than most; He's a splendid stone-cutter, though I say it, and it hurts him fearful when folks don't patronise him: And though I've no business to speak of it, ma'am, to you as knows what's best, still, if you should see fit to let Jabez have the job, I'm sure he'd give every satisfaction and be proud to do it: I hope you'll pardon my mentioning it, but, as you asks me, I must tell the truth, though I don't need no reward for doing as I'd be done by in the matter of that night."

She stopped from shortness of breath:

Miss Massom reflected a moment, and a fleeting smile crossed her sad face:

"I don't think there will be any difficulty about that, Mrs. Tite," she answered; "though, of course, I shall have to consult the rest of my family: I had thought of Mr. Tite, and I am glad you reminded me of him: It will not be my fault if he doesn't get the order."

Martha thanked her warmly, and went on her way feeling as if she had won a battle:

Jabez came down next day: He was soon tired of lying in bed, and declared himself a trifle better, though he still complained of "symtims," and indulged in extremely funereal conversation:

His capacity in this respect was almost unlimited, as he had attended a great number of burials and knew the details of many mortal illnesses: But Martha bore up cheerfully, nursing a hope in her heart that lent her courage; and one day that hope was fulfilled:

They were sitting over breakfast in her kitchen, and she was putting a few stitches in a coat of his that needed mending, when a servant brought a note from Miss Massom to Jabez: He put on his spectacles to read it, without relaxing from the gloomy expression that had become his habitual one:

Martha watched his face furtively, with anxious eyes. Presently the gloomy expression vanished in a look of cherubic joy. He read the letter through, and through again. Then he handed it over to her.

"Read this, missus," he said, with something between a sob and a chuckle. "It'll make you sit up."

Martha read it, her hands trembling as she held the paper. It was an order from Miss Massom for a handsome marble monument to grace her father's tomb, and concluded by saying that no expense was to be spared:

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, with well-feigned astonishment: "You are a-getting on, Jabez, and no mistake, with orders from the gentry like this here. I should ha' thought they'd ha' sent to London at least."

Jabez rose and stood with his back to the fireplace, his two thumbs in the armholes of his coat, his chest expanded with pride, and his chubby face glowing:

"It all comes," he said magnificently, "of having a repitation for good work: Haven't I told you so over and over again? It's that as done it. I shouldn't wonder if the old gentleman put it in his will as I were to have the job: I remember one day, as he was passing by, he stops and says to me: 'You take a great pride in your work, Mr. Tite, and I'm not surprised neither, as you do it so well.' Them were his very words. You may depend upon it, Martha, my gal, he left instructions."

"I shouldn't wonder, Jabez," responded the wise little woman, putting the end of her thread into her mouth to hide a slight twitching at the corners: "I shouldn't wonder at all, Jabez."

* * * * *

They are living very happily together again now: Trade has improved, and so has the health of Jabez: He no longer indulges in "symtims," and seems to have entirely forgotten that he will ever want a tombstone.

How Milverton Changed His Luck.

By BERNARD ENSOR.

*In which a man displays great ingenuity in resisting the fascination
of the gaming-tables.*

EDGAR MILVERTON was depressed: The sensation was almost new to him, but to-night he could not throw it off.

It was the second week in December, and, looking back over the past year, he was obliged to admit that it had been a bad one for him right through. He was only one of many who had suffered from lack of business and unpleasant surprises on the Stock Exchange during the past twelve months, but misfortune had not yet had time to drive him into a philosophical mood. He resented it:

Everybody had grown accustomed to see Milverton bring something off, even when stagnation reigned. He carefully stowed away for future use each bit of knowledge that came his way, and always met the mournful looks of his colleagues with a smile of assurance in his own powers to create a little ripple on stagnant waters to his pecuniary benefit:

This year, however, had been an exception—the first one—and as he took the train homewards on this damp, foggy evening he felt that there was little opportunity left for him to pull things together before the New Year. His balance at the bank had never been so low, and, to pay ordinary current expenses and outstanding bills, he would have to overdraw, unless he could hit upon some plan to increase it.

His wife, since their marriage, had grown accustomed to prosperous times, and part of her admiration for her husband—though she did not know it—was due to his successful ventures. He felt that to have to point out to her the necessity for immediate retrenchment and economy would shake her confidence in his business capabilities and cast a shadow over their mutual happiness.

He considered it humiliating to admit, even to himself, that misfortune could be anything but temporary.

"I must do something, find some plan to put a bit of life into things," he said to himself. "It would take all the heart out of the wife, if I suddenly went to her with a long face and explanations that would sound like complaints to her ears; possibly things may take a turn if I can tide over the next month or two."

By the time he had reached his own front door he had come to a decision.

Dinner was over; the two little curly-headed daughters were slumbering peacefully upstairs; and Milverton was enjoying a cigar by the fire, with his pretty wife in an arm-chair opposite to him.

"Nellie," he said, "things are very slow in the City just now. I suppose it is the approach of the holidays. Anyhow, they are not likely to wake up before the New Year, and I don't like the idea of sitting with my arms crossed doing nothing for the next month. I hope you won't mind very much, old girl, but I have decided to run over to Paris this week. You know I have a good many clients there, and I shall be sure to pick up some useful information on the Bourse."

"Oh, Edgar, what a shame! I do so like to have you at home at this time of the year. The evenings are so long when one is alone. It is horrid weather for traveling, too."

"What you say is very true, my dear, and I would much rather stay at home; but, as a rule, it is very difficult for me to go away for more than forty-eight hours at a time, and here is an opportunity for a week or more. In that time I may be able to lay the foundation of some very solid business for next year. I shall be certain to be back before the New Year, and then you and I and the bairns will have an extra jolly time together."

So it was settled that Milverton should go to Paris on the following Wednesday;

in two days from the time this conversation took place:

Wednesday proved a boisterous day, and he arrived tired and wet after a rough journey across the Channel. After dinner he found himself out on the brilliantly-lighted boulevards, and, being alone, he wandered up to the Casino de Paris to pass the remaining hours of the evening before returning to his hotel.

The state of his affairs caused Milverton considerable anxiety, and in this popular music-hall, filled with a careless, cosmopolitan throng, and bright with colour and music, he gloomily watched the *habitués* exchanging their nods and comments, and parties of tourists rapt in contemplation of these latter, rather than of the artistes on the stage, whose songs conveyed little to their understanding.

He was alone, and he hated to be alone. He had strolled round the wide, open hall several times, and almost began to know by sight the couples sitting on the raised side-galleries which ran just above the level of his head.

The boisterous merriment of the men and the forced smiles and upward glances of the women, as they leant over the straws in their high tumblers, began to irritate him. He felt that he could not honestly take a part in the general gaiety, and that his own mood was out of place there. He was thinking of cutting his visit short and leaving, when he espied a familiar face.

"Hallo, Watson, what are you doing over here? It is not business that brings you, I'll be bound."

"Why, Milverton, this is a surprise!" ejaculated his friend. "And you? What are you doing all alone in Paris? I thought you were the man that could never tear himself away from hearth and home."

Edgar explained the object of his visit over a glass of liqueur, which they took at one of the small tables in the centre of the hall.

"Well, I wish you luck," said Watson; "I have just come back from Monte Carlo, and mine has been atrocious—or rather I have been a fool. I am a pretty level-headed individual, and can generally carry through anything I have thought out, coolly and calmly, but there is something in the air of that place which upsets the firmest resolves and plays havoc with the wisest plans."

"I had made up my mind to risk a bit on a system I had heard of—don't laugh—

and if it came off to cut and run when I had a respectable profit: The system came off all right, but I was fool enough to tell myself I was in luck, and leave Monte Carlo I could not. The consequence was that I began to play for higher stakes with my winnings, and I have left them, with a good deal more, behind me:

"It is simply extraordinary and inexplicable, Milverton; as long as a man has money, it is impossible to get out of that place: It grips him, it mesmerises him: I believe there are only two ways of leaving it; either as a pauper, or an undesirable."

"What do you mean by an undesirable?"

"Why, you know, the bumptious little State is terribly particular. They have a horror of any scandal: It is such a bad advertisement for their very philanthropic establishment. The place is studded with detectives and private police who know everything about everybody, and they always manage to keep disagreeable events very quiet. Absconding cashiers and runaway wives are not arrested but asked to move on, and are politely conducted to the frontier, which is only a few hundred yards away. Would-be suicides, though, are their especial abomination, and, if caught in the act, are hustled into France or Italy as the most 'undesirable' of all."

"There seems to be a good deal of tragedy about that very alluring spot; but tell me about your system, I am interested."

Watson complied with the request, and they chatted together on various topics until they separated to go to their respective hotels:

Milverton had almost reached his own, and was deep in thought over his plans for the next day, when his attention was aroused by a well-dressed woman, who had been walking in front of him, suddenly slipping and falling heavily to the ground with a loud cry. He started forward and helped her to rise, but her ankle was evidently so painful that she could scarcely stand, and she clung to him for support.

The situation was embarrassing, and for a moment he was at a loss what to do next. The woman herself, however, solved the difficulty and asked him, in a voice choked with pain, to put her into a cab.

Supporting her with one arm, he motioned to a passing vehicle with the other. The cab drew up at the kerb, and he carefully helped the victim of the accident to a comfortable position inside, gave her address to the driver, and continued on his way to

his hotel, pleased at having been able to render this small service to a stranger.

It was not more than half-an-hour later when Milverton made an unpleasant discovery: While undressing to get into bed, he found that his pocket-book, containing ten five-pound notes, had disappeared!

For some time he was totally unable to imagine when and where he could have lost it. Suddenly he thought of the lady with the sprained ankle. Yes, that was it! She must have picked his pocket. Certainly, in his desire to help her, and in the way he had allowed her to cling to him, he had given her every opportunity:

Well, the money was gone, and he had not the numbers of the notes, which would—he thought—probably be posted to an accomplice in London to-morrow:

The feeling of regret at the loss of the money—itsself very unwelcome at this particular moment—was less keen than the sense of humiliation at having been tricked by a common thief.

Milverton always smiled when people talked of his good luck; he had always attributed his success to his own foresight and acumen; to avoiding the traps other men fell into so easily, and to originality of action, daring to carry out plans that others would have hesitated to attempt:

His visit to Paris had begun badly, and his experiences on the following morning did not prove of a nature to promise a successful issue. The Bourse was as flat and devoid of life as the Stock Exchange in London; he called at the house of his principal Paris client, the Honourable Arthur Canterton, and found that he had left some days before for Monte Carlo.

All this was very disappointing. Milverton was growing angry at such an unusual—to him—series of kicks from the lady Fortune, till recently so considerate for his welfare. He had, however, immense confidence in himself and was persuaded that the rebuffs were only temporary.

"If I go back home now," he thought, "I shall only have a story of woe to pour into Nell's ear, and it was to avoid doing that that I came away. I don't often feel devoid of resource, and I must try something else before I go back."

Having decided this point, he set his mind to work on the problem, and before long came to the conclusion that Monte Carlo offered a double attraction under the circumstances.

He would play a little, just to pull that

fifty pounds back, and then Canterton was down there, and he particularly wanted to see him.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I will go. There is plenty of time left to get there and back again before the New Year, and it is practically useless my putting in an appearance in the City before then."

He paid a visit to a firm of Paris bankers with whom he frequently transacted business, and they readily advanced him fifty pounds.

The journey southwards through the heart of France interested and amused him, and he was not long in making an acquaintance in the restaurant-car; a man, who, like himself, was bound for the little patch of country where so much is lost and won. Their conversation ran on the gaming-tables and the attractions of roulette, and by the time he reached Monte Carlo, Milverton found that the desire to play was rapidly gaining a hold upon him.

Soon after his arrival he consulted a list of visitors, from which he learnt where the Hon. A. Canterton was staying; he called upon him and found him much too interested and absorbed, for the time being, in *rouge et noir* to pay attention to stocks and shares. His journey would evidently not give much result in that quarter.

Baffled in all his attempts at legitimate business within the bounds of his professional limits, and considerably poorer than when he set out from London, Milverton's thoughts naturally reverted to the "tables" as a possible means of recuperating his losses and, perhaps, stemming the tide of misfortune.

He had not forgotten the details of the system which his friend Watson had found successful, and the next day saw him seated at the green cloth, with a small pile of louis and five-franc pieces beside him.

At first luck wavered, being now in his favour, now against him; a time came, however, when he won steadily, and, having carefully noted the progress of his gains, he rose from his seat with a profit of £50. Well satisfied at having so easily replaced the sum stolen from him in Paris, he did not return to the gaming-rooms again that day.

But he had heard the chink of the gold and silver coins, the rustle of the notes, the monotonous repetition of the same phrases over and over again by the croupiers; even out in the open air they were in his ears; they called to him, telling him that

here was money, money in quantities; that he only need come and take it away in handfuls as he had taken his fifty pounds. The success of his first venture rendered the prospect of ultimate loss improbable in his eyes; it had seemed so easy to win.

Such reflections were not long in leading him back to the gorgeously-decorated salons. He followed the same method of play and again Fortune favoured him.

By the time he reached his hotel that night he had forgotten all else; his brain ran constantly on colours and numbers, and each new combination of them that suggested itself seemed a path to riches. It *must* last; he had only to go on in the same way; and he would stay in Monte Carlo, he thought, as long as it did last.

Suddenly, as this thought came into his mind, he remembered the conversation with Watson: Was he, too, hypnotised by the atmosphere of the place?

He sat down to study the question calmly, and, the old confidence in himself returning, he fell into his usual habit of analysing the situation and formulating a plan to meet its demands.

His meditations came to an end in an extraordinary fashion, for a man who was seated all alone in his bedroom.

He slapped his knee, threw back his head, and roared with laughter.

"By Jove, I'll do it!" he cried. "Watson said a man could only get away from here as a pauper or an undesirable, and I don't mean to be the former if I can help it."

Milverton's third visit to the roulette-table was, like its predecessors, attended with the consistent good fortune which is so rare there. Strange to say, the turn of the wheel continued to favour the system he was following:

He had been playing for higher stakes this time, and, conscious that he must have won a considerable sum, he retired to one of the leather seats in a corner of the room in order to count his gains. He was surprised to find that, in notes and gold, he possessed seven hundred and fifty-six pounds.

"If I could only make it a thousand!" was the first thought to flash through his mind.

Then he saw the danger. He would not be like others and throw away such a gift of chance. Yet he could not trust himself to leave Monte Carlo of his own free will.

He rose and walked across the highly-polished floor to the vestibule beyond, without so much as a glance in the direction

of the players. He turned into the cloak-room on the left of the main entrance, and gave up a metal disc in exchange for his hat and walking-stick; then, without putting his hat on his head, he passed out and stood on the topmost step under the porch.

Leaning against one of the massive columns that stand on either side, he let his hat and stick fall to the ground, and, drawing a small revolver from his pocket, placed the barrel to his head and fired.

More quickly almost than he could press the trigger, he was seized on either side and surrounded by half-a-dozen men, who, quietly and peremptorily, bore him away from the entrance and down a flight of steps to the basement. There, in a room that could not be seen from the Square, he was requested to sit down. When he had done so, and was found to be uninjured, an official came forward and informed him that no proceedings would be taken against him, and that no questions would be asked.

"This gentleman," he said, in perfect English, while pointing to a clean-shaven man in a tweed suit, with the appearance of an American tourist, "will accompany you to your hotel. He will wait while you pack your luggage, and then you will go with him to the railway station, where he will purchase a first-class ticket for you to Paris and see you into the train. It will be useless for you to attempt to return, as you are now known, and you will not again be admitted into the Principality. I wish you good-day."

* * * * *

By the time the train ran into Marseilles, Milverton had recovered all his self-possession and was silently congratulating himself on the complete success of his little plan.

The blank cartridge, fired well over his head, had not even singed his hair, and the roll of banknotes in his new pocket-book was thick enough to set his mind at rest for many months to come; moreover, he was quite confident that the incident, which had begun and ended so quickly, would never be allowed to leak out.

* * * * *

"Back again, Nell," said Milverton, as his wife helped him off with his traveling-coat, and the children danced round him with shouts of welcome; "and very glad to be here, but I have done a good stroke of business and I am not sorry I went. Open this little leather case. There is rather a pretty diamond bracelet inside it."

A Well-Earned Ninepence.

* * * * * By ERROLL STANHOPE.

How a poor little child obtained a country treat for himself.

A SMALL boy, meagrely clad, and evidently more meagrely fed, sat on a stone kerb meditating hard: He spelt sentences out of a torn sheet of paper with great difficulty:

His whole being was consumed with envy and bitterness towards the organisers of Children's Funds in the abstract, and one—Billy Hobbs in the particular: For hadn't Billy Hobbs taunted him with his continued misfortune in not being treated to the country when every other child in the whole world had been?

Nobody knows the grinding misery in his twelve-year-old breast when Hobbs swaggered across the school-yard and recounted how he had caught a hen in the act of getting off her nest in which lay a hot brown egg! Hot, mark you! Boiling hot, to use Hobbs' own words. And the adventures he went through, and the things that he saw, became more marvelous every time he related them until Henry Lee—for that was the name of the hero on the kerb—could bear it no longer:

"I shall 'ave to go just to see that 'Obbs ain't told no lies," he said to himself: "If I let 'im go on like this we shall 'ear 'e's bin round the world next."

And once more he fell to deciphering the torn sheet which he held in his hand.

... one who sends ninepence to the office of this pa ild into the country day.

he made out after a while:

"So that's it! Folks sends ninepences—psha! what a 'eap of money—and the kids get took if they're lucky. I ain't struck it lucky; every bloomin' kid in the place 'as gone but me. So there's only one thing to be done: I must 'ave it out with Bill some'ow or other, so I'd better pay for myself, that's all!"—and he started to count his worldly wealth. Two farthings and a halfpenny!

"That's a penny towards it," he said cheerfully, renouncing at the same time his dinner of fish and "chips." "Now then for it."

A lady passed down the street carrying a small bag:

"Carry yer bag, miss—carry yer bag, miss?" he cried breathlessly:

"No; go away, dirty child."

"Let me carry yer bag—I'll carry it all the way for a penny, miss!"

"It's not heavy, thanks."

"If it was I'd carry it for a penny—carry yer bag, miss?" he repeated, determined not to leave go:

The lady smiled. "Here's a halfpenny," she said; "now run away."

Then he tried the railway station, where he saw a stout old gentleman carrying a neat brown bag:

"Carry yer bag, sir?"

"Go away."

"I'll carry it up the 'ill for a penny, sir."

"I'm not going up the hill."

"Then I'll carry it for a 'a'penny."

"How far?"

"All the way, sir."

The stout old gentleman stopped:

"You boys are a confounded nuisance," he said: "Here, take it, and, mind you—all the way for a halfpenny."

Henry shouldered the bag (which was much heavier than it looked), and started joyfully:

Down one street, up another, across a road, round the corner, down a long street, up a longer one! Was it never going to end?

At last he could stand it no more, and came to a full stop.

"Go on, my lad, go on!" the old gentleman said sharply.

"I'll catch yer up, guv'nor!" he gasped: "My boots ain't so good as yours—it comes a bit 'ard walking"—and he leant against a lamp-post quite exhausted.

"Poor child—you shouldn't have carried it so far: Here, give it to me: Did your father send you out to carry parcels?"

"No, sir; I'm workin' on my own—I want to go to the country and it costs 9d., and I ain't had no luck to be took, so I'm goin' on my own."

"How much have you got towards it?"

"A penny 'a'penny, sir."

"Well, here's sevenpence halfpenny more, and now you've got it."

With shouts of joy Lee made his way to the nearest railway station and up to the booking office.

"Ticket to the country, please," he said.

"What's this?" said a voice inside.

"One to the country, please, sir."

"Whereabouts in the country?"

"Where the kids gets took for the day."

The ticket man wasn't busy as it happened, so he came round out of his door.

"You're in the wrong shop, my boy," he said, not unkindly. "We don't issue tickets like that. You've got to send that money to a paper. Ask at the bookstall."

Henry disappointedly went to the bookstall, and there he saw on a large placard: "Send ninepence to-day and have the pleasure of giving a child a day in the country. Address—"

He knew the street. He could soon find the office. He made his way out of the station quickly.

It was now late in the afternoon, and he was very tired.

"I can't go till to-morrow anyway, now, so it ain't no good to 'urry," he argued, and being very hungry he lay down on a convenient doorstep and slept.

It was dark when he woke. Struggling to his feet he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and started for the office where they took ninepences.

After a time he reached it; all dark and shut up. Now what was he to do?

A little newsagent's was a few doors off, so Henry Lee walked in. A young woman sat reading a magazine.

"Will you write somethin' on a paper for me—I ain't got no pencil?" he said slowly.

The girl said she didn't mind.

"Just put 'This is to take H. Lee inter the country because he'd rather pay for himself.—Yours truly, Henry Lee,' please, miss."

"What are you going to do with it, then?"

"Take it to the office and wait for the answer."

The girl wrote the message, and the small lad retraced his steps. Over the letter-box was painted, "Matter for next issue to be placed here." It seemed a likely spot, so wrapping his precious ninepence in the letter, Henry dropped it into the box.

It fell with a thud and all was silence. He waited for some while, but no one

came. Gradually it dawned on his little, starved mind that something was wrong with this system of taking ninepence in return for a day in the country.

"It's a bilk, that's what it is, it's a bloomin' bilk, and there ain't goin' to be no country—'ere, I want my ninepence, d'yer hear—I want my ninepence!" he shouted with his mouth to the letter box.

But nobody came, and he sank down on the step, sobbing with misery and hunger.

A journalist, with copy for the morning edition and proofs to correct, fell over him about an hour later, asleep on the cold stone.

"Good gracious, what is it—a dog?" he muttered, as he struck a match:

"No, guv'nor, it's a bilk—if you've put your money in the box you've been done brown same as me, I tell yer! I wanted to go in the country, so I collected my ninepence jest to see if it was as great as 'Obbs lets on it is, and now some bloke's bin and pinched my money, and I'm bloomin' well done out of it!"

The journalist unlocked the door and saw the humble little packet on the floor.

He picked it up and found it necessary to take off his glasses and wipe them.

* * * *

"As for you, Bill 'Obbs, you didn't tell as many lies as you usually do, but you see I 'ad to prove wot you said was true! One can't take your word for things, you know—you *are* such a liar!" said Henry Lee, as he strutted across the school-yard with a tanned face and a piece of faded buttercup still in his buttonhole.

"So, you see, I've bin in the country myself—I went with a lot from 'Olloway, but, mind you, I paid for myself. None of yer charity treats for *me*, thanks! I 'opes I can pay for my own days out, and if you'll come round the corner, 'Obbs, I'll pay you out for sayin' hens lay hot eggs; they're not hot till they're boiled 'cause I arsked—see! but if any on you wants a fair treat, come round to me at the office and I'll see if I can work it for yer—those on yer wot is particular pals o' mine (you needn't come, 'Obbs)—because I'm gettin' four shillings a week now carryin' parcels in the office where they take ninepences to shove kids out in the country. Yer see, it pays to be independent and find yer own ninepence *sometimes*."

The Fresh Air Fund is the Fund that sends poor little boys like Henry Lee and Billy Hobbs—and girls, too—into the country for the day. The sum required for each child's outing is ninepence, which includes the cost of two substantial meals. Ninepences—or larger amounts—should be sent to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. They will be acknowledged in the columns of *Pearson's Weekly*.

Tales of My Clients.

✱ ✱ By A LADY PHOTOGRAPHER.

Edited by GERTIE DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES.

Beatrice Hannel, an officer's daughter, opens an art-photo-graphic studio in Kensington as a means of adding to her slender income. She here tells some of the most fascinating romances in which, through her clients, she has been concerned. Each story is complete in itself.

V.—A Second Impression.

I WAS escorting the Duchess of Tramont as far as the entrance lounge, when I first saw the big, bronzed young man with the effective moustache:

"Now, Miss Hannel, you *will* send the proofs to-morrow, *won't* you?" the Duchess was saying: "I am so very anxious to show—ah! what *delicious* music! Wagner is always so inspiring, isn't he?" she broke off, as the hidden orchestra, which I engaged for the entertainment of waiting clients, started a current comic opera selection!

Then by accident I caught the bronzed young man's eyes: The ocular encounter could hardly be called a glance, but it was sufficient to establish one of those friendly sympathies which do occasionally spring up between absolute strangers. Instinctively I liked him:

When the Duchess had taken her portly, petunia-gowned person out of the front door, I crossed towards Miss Thorne, who was by that time attending to the bronzed young man:

"This gentleman wants a portrait that was taken about six months ago," began my receptionist:

"Yes—of my sister," he explained, in a delightfully big voice: "She had it taken about last June, I think—she copied the number off the back of the one she has, and gave it to me. Er—er—now where is it? I expect I've lost it—I always lose things!" he added rather plaintively, as he dived into pocket after pocket:

"Perhaps we could——" I began, just as he triumphantly discovered a small slip of paper on which was written the number 100,053:

"Ah! saved!" he ejaculated, handing me the paper, which I immediately passed on to Miss Thorne: "Can I have the picture soon?" he went on: "My sister is getting it for me to take abroad: I've only recently returned from Africa, and shall probably be

going out again in a couple of weeks, so if you could kindly send it before then, I should be awfully obliged."

"I don't think there's any reason why you shouldn't have it on Thursday," I replied:

"On Thursday! Oh! that is quick work! Thanks very much: Well, if you'll send it—no, I shall be in Kensington on Thursday, I'll call in some time during the afternoon: Thanks awfully: Good-day!"

"We didn't take the name and address in case the gentleman should forget to call," said Miss Thorne, after he had gone, regarding me with a certain amount of respectful severity:

"That's not difficult to find out if you look in the sitters' book, is it?" I replied more sharply than I should have done if Miss Thorne had looked less severe:

My receptionist was evidently quelled, so without further remark she stepped into a small inner office and took down one of many vast tomes from one of many dusty shelves:

"This would be the one—year ending 1905, wouldn't it?" she mumbled, turning over the pages:

"Yes, six months ago *would* be included in the present year," I answered:

"100,050—100,051—100,052—100,053—ah! here they are, Miss Hannel!—do you see? 'No: 100,053, *Miss Camilla Flower, Southdean, Queenston Road, Wimbledon*—six panel vignettes, platinotype—£5 5s.'"

"Thank you," I answered, inspecting the entry to impress it upon my memory: "Now we'll just go and look for the plate, as the matter must be put in hand at once."

When we reached an underground room which was devoted to the storage of back number plates and unopened bottles of chemicals, I ran my finger along the carefully-initialed shelves till I came to those holding plates taken about six months ago—after which it was easy to find No. 100,053:

"Here it is," I said, lifting out the dusty glass and holding it up sideways so that I could catch the impression.

And then I remembered all about Miss Camilla Flower, as being one among the small percentage of clients who interested me in any but their remunerative capacities.

"You recollect, don't you, Miss Thorne, that pretty, fair girl whose marriage with a stout, elderly stockbroker was broken off a fortnight before the wedding-day?" I said, turning to my assistant.

"No—er—I don't think so, Miss Hannel."

"Oh! but you *must*, because we talked about it at the time. We felt sure that she was a girl with a story, and afterwards you heard through your dressmaker (who was Miss Flower's maid's cousin) that Mr. Flower had insisted on his daughter accepting the stockbroker, and then, just two weeks before the wedding-day, he found that the settlements were not worth while, so it was a mutual case of giving up."

"May I look at the plate, Miss Hannel?—I daresay that will recall the occurrence."

Here I passed the glass to Miss Thorne, who carefully inspected the impression of a wistful-eyed, white-gowned girl, whose beautifully-shaped hands were listlessly clasped about a small marble pillar. I remember being particularly proud of that pose because, although the hands were prominent, they retained their correct dimensions.

"Of course I recollect now!" ejaculated Miss Thorne. "The young lady came with her mother, and seemed to have no interest whatever in the picture or in anything else. In fact, I remarked at the time that she seemed to be grieving for her lost stockbroker! Oh! yes, of course—Miss Camilla Flower—they had just moved from Leicester to Wimbledon a few weeks before the portrait was taken."

True to my promise the second impression of No. 100,053 was ready by Thursday, and as I inspected the large portrait I more than ever recalled how the sitter had appealed to my artistic tastes.

It was such a pretty little face, with one of those fascinating upper lips which in repose protrude ever so slightly, thus giving a petulant, babyish expression. Her eyes were beautiful and full of vague dreams; and her nose, although unclassified, was delicious.

While I was closely inspecting the portrait, my hidden orchestra softly broke into that most inspiring of all commonplace refrains—"Because I love you!" And as the music

called and cried, it seemed almost as though those pretty, pictured lips were moving! Were they saying "*Because I love you? Because I love—*"

Oh, dear! what an absurdly fanciful and romantic art-photographer I was to be sure! Wouldn't business facts and business difficulties ever knock the imaginative sentiment out of me?

Giving myself an impatient shake I put Miss Flower's portrait into a long, white envelope embossed with my initials and address in gold, just as Miss Thorne came and informed me that Mr. Flower had arrived.

"Have him shown into the waiting-room, please—I will see him myself," I said. And a minute later I was saying "Good afternoon" to the nice, bronzed young man.

"I have managed to get the photograph done," I said, handing him the envelope and speaking as though some stupendously-difficult task had been achieved.

"Oh! thanks awfully! Jolly quick work!" he replied, taking out the portrait and moving towards the light.

Then suddenly he stopped, while a swift pallor lightened the bronze of his face.

"Miss Hannel, is this some practical joke?" he inquired, with a severity that made him seem quite a different person.

"I do not understand you," I replied haughtily. "You asked for your sister's portrait—"

"I *did*, and that is why I wish to know if it is intended as a practical joke when you hand me the photograph of Miss Camilla Flower—at least *Mrs. Burrows*, I should say." (These last seven words were uttered almost *sotto voce*.)

"But *isn't* Miss Camilla Flower your sister?"

"Miss Camilla is—is *not*," he replied very bluntly.

"Well, Mr.—er—"

"My name is Tristan Dylke."

"Well, Mr. Dylke, I can't in the least understand what has happened unless—Ah!" Here I broke off with an exclamation as a sudden idea shot through my haze of perplexity.

"Would you mind coming into the office for a moment—I want to refer to the sitters' book."

Mr. Dylke wordlessly assented, as, almost unconsciously picking up the photograph of the girl who was *not* his sister, he followed me through the waiting-room into the office.

Immediately I took down the sitters' book to which we had referred only a few

days previously, and turned over the pages until I found the entry in question, after which I detached the slip of paper (neatly filed like every business memorandum, of either great or trivial importance) on which Miss Dylke had jotted down the number of her photograph:

Then I understood—understood that Miss Dylke's carelessly-made 8 had been mistaken by both Miss Thorne and myself for a 3, and that in looking up the entry of her photograph we had turned to 100,053, instead of 100,058, 100,053 being Miss Flower's number:

In apologetic accents and with humble, downcast lashes, I explained to Mr. Dylke what had occurred, but whether he quite took in all the details of what I was saying is doubtful, because when at last I dared to look up, it was to find him still examining Camilla Flower's photograph with most minute attention:

"You say this was taken six months ago?" he said, in somewhat breathless and jerky accents.

"Yes—on the 20th of June," I replied, glancing at the entry opposite Miss Flower's name and address, and determining to be accurate this time.

"And—er—(pray pardon this cross-examination!) are you sure that this lady's name was Miss Camilla Flower and not Mrs. Burrows? I see by the portrait that she is not wearing a wedding-ring, but—er—"

"Oh, yes—perfectly certain." And here I laughed—I was thinking of the fat stock-broker and the unsatisfactory settlements:

"You seem amused, Miss Hannel," replied Tristan Dylke, bringing his stern manner into requisition once more, but still gazing at the unringed, pictured hand:

"Oh, no, indeed I'm not. I was only thinking how it served old Mr. Flower right!" I said:

"Miss Hannel if—if you have any consideration for—for—er—for my feelings, will you tell me all you know about Miss Flower's averted marriage?" said Mr. Dylke, suddenly dropping the pretence of being only casually interested:

"All I know is that Mr. Flower (who is a terrible autocrat, I believe) wished to force his poor, pretty daughter into marriage with a man who was rich enough to be particularly useful to the family. But when the time came for making settlements, Mr. Burrows showed that none of his money would filter into the pockets of Flower père, and that

although the future Mrs. Burrows would be provided with every luxury, she wouldn't have £50 a year to call her own. This decided Mr. Flower that the negotiations were not good enough, so, just two weeks before the wedding-day, poor, pretty Miss Camilla was released from her unsavoury bondage. That is all I know, Mr. Dylke."

"Thank you—thank you," was his only answer, but the voice in which he said those two words told me a very great deal that my romantic heart reveled in knowing.

"And now, Mr. Dylke, that I have been so communicative, may I be privileged to ask why this information interests you?" was my next remark:

A second's pause, during which his nice, bronzed face grew more deeply tinted; then he said:

"Er—er—oh! Yes, certainly: Well—er—there's a chap I—er—know rather well who was just going to ask Miss Flower to be his wife when he heard that she was engaged to Amos Burrows, so I—I thought he might like to hear the news, you know."

"Certainly he *ought* to hear the news, and from my heart I wish that 'chap' the very best of luck, Mr. Dylke!"

"Oh! by the by, Miss Hannel, could you kindly give me Miss Flower's address? When I—er—when my friend knew her, she lived near Chester, but now the family have come up to London, I believe," said Mr. Dylke, turning back when he had nearly reached the door.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Dylke, that it's absolutely against my rules to give the address of one client to another. If I did such a thing it would be a breach of faith, and I shouldn't deserve for any further confidence to be reposed in me," I answered stiffly. Then I looked up and saw an expression in Tristan Dylke's steady blue eyes that made me feel as though I had shut a hungry, faithful dog outside in the street on a snowy night. "The address is here—on this page," I added, indicating the open sitters' book, "but really I can't be responsible for giving it to you, and—oh! excuse me one moment, I think I can hear the telephone."

* * * * *

Three months later I photographed a wedding group in Wimbledon, and one of the bridegroom's gifts to the bride was a brooch formed of the numbers "100,053" in diamonds:

(Next month will appear "The Man in Rags," the concluding story in this series.)

Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction.

It is the purpose of this feature to present to the readers of THE NOVEL MAGAZINE English translations of the best stories by foreign writers. Excellent fiction appears in the periodicals of France, Germany, Russia, and many other countries, but it is inaccessible to those who do not understand these languages—the pick of this fiction is published here.

YANKO, THE MUSICIAN.

*By H. SIENKIEWICZ. (From the Polish. Translated by
Alys Hallard.)*

Henryk Sienkiewicz, the author of "*Quo Vadis*," that book of world-wide fame, was born in 1846. While at the University of Warsaw he, with the other students, was given an essay to write on Szarzynski, a famous Polish poet of the sixteenth century. The literary style of his essay was so excellent that it attracted the attention of the Professors, and it was published by special request. After this he began to write short stories, of which "*Yanko, the Musician*," is considered a masterpiece. Sienkiewicz is an ardent patriot, and his pen is ever at the service of his country; he has written many political pamphlets and newspaper articles in the cause of Poland. In his stories he enters completely into the spirit of the periods he describes, and inspires his characters with life, at the same time having scrupulous regard to historical truth and accuracy. In 1905 Sienkiewicz was awarded the Nobel prize for literature.

HE came into the world such a poor, sickly-looking little child, that the neighbours all shook their heads, and the blacksmith's wife, who was always considered to have the readiest word, undertook to console the poor mother.

"Poor dear!" she uttered sympathisingly, "I am afraid we might just as well light the candles at once, for you will never get up again. We'll send for the priest, so that you can make your confession, for Heaven knows it isn't worth while carrying one's sins into the next world!"

"But the child?" interrupted one of the other women. "He can't wait for the priest. We'd better baptise him at once, so that the good God will preserve him from becoming a *strzyga*! * Poor little thing!"

One of the women then took the child in her arms, a candle was lighted, and she

sprinkled the poor baby's face with water until it screwed up its eyes:

"I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and I name you Yanko. And now, as you are a Christian, poor little soul, you can go back where you came from: Amen!"

The little soul, however, appeared to have no wish to return to the place it came from: On the contrary, the little arms and legs began to stretch and kick about, and the poor little mite uttered such a faint and pitiful cry that, as one of the neighbours remarked, it was more like a kitten's mew than a child's cry.

The priest came, and, after hearing the mother's confession, went away again: Ten days later she was working again in the fields and the child was still living.

* The peasants of Masovia, in Poland, believe that if a child dies without being baptised he will turn into a kind of owl with two wings and a child's head. These extraordinary creatures are supposed to be *strzyga*, and it is said they pass the night on cemetery walls hooting like owls. The person who hears one is fated to die the same year.

When he was ten years old, Yanko was a curious-looking boy. He was very thin, his face was sunburnt, and he had large, dreamy eyes with dark circles under them, thick, long, fair hair, and a haggard, old look about him altogether. It always seemed as though he were looking at something far, far away beyond the horizon:

In the Winter, he would sit close to the stove and cry quietly from hunger and cold when his poor mother had nothing to put either in the stove or in the saucepan:

In the Summer, he went about in a long blouse pinafore, tied round the waist with a piece of woollen stuff, and on his head he wore a large straw hat with a broken brim, and when he held his head back to look up under the big brim, there was something about the poor little object which reminded one of a bird. His mother, a poor peasant woman, lived as the birds do, from day to day. She was fond of Yanko, in her way, but that did not prevent her beating him and calling him a "crazy lad."

When he was eight years old he had to mind the sheep or to gather mushrooms in the forest, and it was thanks to the protection of Heaven alone that he was not devoured by wolves.

He was not very intelligent, poor little Yanko, and his mother never counted on him much for anything. There was one thing, however, that he adored, and that was music.

Sometimes when he had gone to the woods to look for wild strawberries he would come back without any, in the greatest excitement, telling his mother that he had heard something like singing in the forest. His mother beat him when he told her such tales and forgot to bring what she had sent him for, and then he would cry and promise not to listen to the music again:

The next time, however, he would hear it again, and it was not his fault if everything in the forest sang. In the fields, too, he heard music, and in the garden the birds sang madly, wildly, until the cherries trembled on the trees:

Everyone in the village laughed at the child, for wherever he went he was always listening to some kind of music, and so the villagers called him Yanko the Musician.

When the Spring came he would go to the brook and make himself a fife with reeds, and at night, when the toads croaked in the marshes, and the bats uttered their hoarse cry as they flew over the heather, and the tomtit sang, he could not sleep, but would

lie listening, and Heaven knows what harmonies he heard in the silence of the night.

On Sundays, his mother used to threaten not to take him to church, for directly the peal of the organ rang out and the choir began to chant, Yanko's eyes seemed as though they were starting out of his head.

Many a time at night, when the forest-keeper was going his round through the little village, he would see the boy in his long pinafore gliding along before him in the shadow as far as the café. He never entered, but he would stand there listening to the music as the villagers danced the *obertass*.*

The violins always sang the same thing: "Zin, zin, zin violin," and the bassoon answered: "Zin, zin, zin rigodin." Oh, how eagerly the poor child listened out there in the dark street, and how his little heart ached to have a violin that would play like that. It was only a little box of wood, but where could he get one from? If only he might hold it in his hands and see just what it was like. : : :

"Now then, little good-for-nothing, get away home with you!"

It was the watchman speaking to him, and he would steal away quietly with bare feet homewards, and all the way the sound of the violins haunted him—"Zin, zin, zin violin," and then the bassoon "Zin, zin, zin rigodin."

Anywhere and everywhere in the village the sound of the violin brought Yanko to the spot. Sometimes it was at a wedding, sometimes a harvest feast. Yanko would arrive, climb up on to the stove† without uttering a word to anyone, and sit there like a cat in the dark with his eyes sparkling.

One day he made a violin for himself with a piece of wood and some horsehair: But, alas, that did not sound like the one at the café, it only made a kind of humming noise like flies buzzing about. He played on it, though, from morning to night, and he was beaten in consequence for his idleness until he was black and blue.

Poor child, he began to get so thin and so old-looking, with his hollow cheeks and his large, wide-open eyes, which were so often full of tears. He was different from all other children, he was something like his own wretched violin which hummed so quietly and looked so insignificant. Before the harvest, when corn was scarce, he was so

* Country dance, something like the waltz.

† The Pólish peasants build stoves with shelves, and during their severe Winters they sleep on these stove shelves

often hungry, for he had scarcely anything to live on but raw carrots—and the great desire to have a violin.

One day Yanko made a great discovery: The footman at the Castle had a violin, and often in the twilight he would play various airs for the benefit of the chambermaid. The coveted instrument was kept in the pantry which was opposite the hall-door:

From that time forth many were Yanko's journeys to the Castle, and in his delight one would have thought his very soul was in his eyes as he gazed at the coveted treasure. If only he might just touch it, just hold it in his hands.

One night the child was at the door of the Castle and there was no one in the pantry: The family had gone away to Italy, and the footman was in the kitchen talking to the chambermaid. Yanko was gazing at the violin, when suddenly the moon, emerging from a cloud, threw its rays on to the instrument: The child could thus see every detail, the strings, the keys, everything:

The sight was fascinating, and the desire to possess such a treasure was getting stronger and stronger. The wind began to rise in the trees, and it seemed to Yanko that he heard a voice murmuring:

"Go in, Yanko, there is no one in the pantry."

It was a lovely evening and the nightingale began to sing:

"Go in, Yanko, take it."

Then the honest *lelek** circled round and round over Yanko's head and it said:

"No, Yanko, no!"

The *lelek* flew away, but the nightingale stayed there, and the wind in the trees murmured:

"There is no one in the hall."

The moon shone again on the violin, and the little, crouching figure in the long pinafore advanced a step.

The nightingale again sang out:

"Go in, Yanko, take it."

One bare foot was on the threshold and the *lelek* came again, murmuring:

"No, Yanko, no!"

Too late! Too late! The child was in the hall. The nightingale stopped singing, the toads croaked hoarsely, and Yanko stood beside the violin, terrified with fright. The sound of his own breathing frightened him, then the moon disappeared again and the darkness frightened him.

Suddenly a plaintive noise echoed in the hall, it was as though someone had touched the string of a violin: A gruff voice called out:

"Who's there?"

Yanko did not dare to move, he held his breath. In another minute all was confusion, the dogs were barking, a man was swearing, heavy blows were being given, and through it all a child's voice cried: "Oh, have mercy, have mercy," whilst the servants came rushing to see what it all was.

The next day Yanko was brought before the *wojt*.* Poor child, they were going to try him as a thief.

The *wojt* and his assistants were puzzled as they looked at the poor little object before them. He could not offer a word of explanation, but just gazed at them with wide-open, terrified eyes. They could not send him to prison, that scrap of a child. As the judge said, they must be merciful to children, and—then he passed his sentence. The watchman was to be called to administer a horsewhipping to the boy, who must promise to reform:

Yanko said nothing, it seemed as though he could not speak, but his large eyes looked larger and rounder than ever. Stack, the watchman, beat him, and it was only then that Yanko found his voice.

"Mother!" he cried, and at every stroke "Mother! oh, mother!" but his voice was weaker and weaker, until at last he was silent again.

"Poor little broken violin."

The mother was sent for. She carried Yanko home. The next day he could not get up, nor the next, nor the next.

* * * * *

The swallows were flying around the cherry-trees in the garden, uttering their little joyous twitter, the golden rays of the setting sun entered through the narrow panes of the poor little home, throwing a halo round the fair hair of the poor child, whose face was as white as the pillow upon which his head rested. The rays of the sun seemed to form a long, shining path straight to Heaven, by which the little soul of the child could fly to Paradise and be for ever at rest.

Alas, it was only in dying that he could travel along a sunny path, the way of life had been for him so thorny and so dark!

* A little night bird with a large beak, very common in Poland.

* A country judge. It is generally one of the peasants who is appointed to this office.

“Oj! na zielonej na runi: ! !”*

"Mother!"

“Mother!—Will God—give me—a violin
—in Heaven?”

She could say no more, for even her rough nature could not bear it, and the pity of it all came over her until she felt suffocated with emotion. Her head dropped on the

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"What a lovely country Italy is!" said the husband to his young wife.

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swindler and desperado—a man with a thousand different disguises, and a villain of the deepest dye, who had made victims all over Europe:

The thought that this arch rogue was among the passengers caused many painful misgivings, but how to identify him was the difficulty: Only the first letter of the fictitious name under which he was traveling had come by the wireless message:

Amongst the passengers was a pretty young lady named Nelly Underdown, the daughter of a rich Chicago millionaire: She was accompanied by one of her friends, Lady Jerland.

In the early part of the voyage I had been thrown into frequent contact with Miss Underdown, and our friendship for one another grew at each meeting—after the manner of ocean friendships.

There was only one man whose rivalry for the smiles of Miss Underdown disquieted me—a handsome young fellow, elegant in manner and dress, but taciturn and reserved in the presence of the passengers. It seemed to me that at times Miss Nelly preferred his taciturnity to my light-hearted gaiety.

On the second day out I was passing along the deck when Miss Nelly exclaimed:

"Ah, Monsieur Audresy, have you any further news yet of Arsene Lupin?"

My rival for the favours of Miss Underdown formed one of a group surrounding her at the time.

"I know nothing exactly," I replied, "but it is possible to solve the mystery. It is only necessary to consult the list of first-class passengers and to proceed by elimination."

I had the list in my pocket and proceeded to examine it. I observed the names of thirteen people, whose initials attracted my attention: Of these there were nine who were accompanied by women, children, and servants. There thus remained only four isolated passengers (including the Marquis de Raverdon), whose names began with the letter "R."

"The Marquis de Raverdon is Secretary to the Italian Ambassador," interrupted Nelly:

"Major Rowson."

"That is my uncle," said someone standing near:

"M. Rivalta."

"Present," shouted one of the company—an Italian whose face was hidden beneath a magnificent black beard:

Miss Underdown laughed as she exclaimed:

"But Monsieur is not exactly a blond."

"Then," I said, "we are obliged to conclude that the guilty one is the last on the list, namely, M. Rozaine. Does anybody know M. Rozaine?"

There was a momentary silence, during which Miss Underdown turned towards my rival, the taciturn one, and said:

"Monsieur Rozaine, why do you not answer to your name?"

All eyes were turned towards him and everybody seemed to realise for the first time that his complexion was fair. The realisation of this gave me a shock, and judging by the silence that prevailed, it must have had the same effect upon the others. But the idea that he could be the guilty one seemed absurd. There was nothing about him to lead to suspicion:

"Why do I not reply?" he said: "Simply because with the colour of my hair and my name I have already analysed the matter, and have arrived at the same result as you. I am of opinion that they will arrest me."

There was a strange pallor in his cheeks and lips as he spoke; but still it seemed that it could only be a little pleasantry in which he was indulging:

"But," exclaimed Miss Underdown, "you have no wound on your arm."

"It is true," he replied, "that the wound is missing." And, with a nervous gesture, he pulled up his coat sleeve and exposed his arm to view.

But an idea struck me, and as it flashed through my brain, my eyes met those of Miss Underdown—he had exposed the left arm and not the right.

I was on the point of giving expression to my thoughts, when an incident diverted my attention. Lady Jerland, Miss Underdown's companion, came running excitedly upon the scene. Everybody pressed around her, and when she had recovered her breath she ejaculated:

"My jewels, my pearls, have all disappeared."

It turned out afterwards that the thief had not taken all. He had made a judicious selection, and taken only the most valuable. In order to do this he had entered Lady Jerland's cabin in open daylight, while she was away at tea. He had smashed her cabin door, had unearthed her jewel-case from the bottom of a hat-box, and had made his selection without leaving a trace of suspicion behind.

There was only one opinion among the passengers; that the thief was Arsene

Lupin. At dinner that night the two places on the right and left of Rozaine were vacant, and later in the evening it became known that he had been summoned before the captain. His arrest caused a feeling of relief on board—a sense of freedom being felt that had been unknown since the disquieting wireless message was first received:

I personally was particularly pleased because it removed a formidable rival from my path, and enabled me to bask more frequently in the smiles of Nelly:

But to the stupefaction of everybody on the following day it was reported throughout the vessel that Rozaine was free again; and that the charge against him had not been proved. The son of a merchant of considerable standing in Bordeaux, he had exhibited his papers to the captain, and had satisfied him as to his *bona-fides*. Besides, his right arm showed no trace whatever of a wound:

But these measures of investigation did not satisfy the passengers, who were convinced that Rozaine was, after all, the guilty one, and that he was none other than Arsene Lupin.

An hour later a document was passed from hand to hand amongst the sailors and the passengers of all classes. The document briefly set forth that M. Rozaine would pay a reward of 10,000 francs to anyone who would unmask Arsene Lupin, or who would restore the stolen jewels:

"And if nobody comes to my aid in unearthing this bandit," said Rozaine to the captain, "I will deal with him single-handed and alone."

The situation was developing into an exceptionally interesting one. Everybody thought Rozaine guilty: It was, therefore, Rozaine against Arsene Lupin, or, rather, according to current gossip, Arsene Lupin himself against Arsene Lupin.

For two whole days the search for the culprit was maintained. Rozaine was busy right and left interrogating everybody, and apparently straining every nerve to clear matters up:

The captain, the officers, the crew and the passengers all joined in the search, every imaginable nook and corner being looked into in the hope of finding the missing jewelry; but all without result. And, as if to add irony to the situation, whilst the search was keenest, the captain's gold watch was reported to have disappeared:

Furious at this crowning offence, the captain redoubled his efforts, and had

several other fruitless interviews with Rozaine:

The following day the captain's watch was found amongst the collars of the second officer. Things were growing desperate, and nobody knew who would be the next victim, either of robbery or suspicion due to the peculiar methods adopted by the thief:

On the succeeding night the officer on duty near the bridge heard sounds of groaning, and on approaching the obscure corner from which the sounds came, he discovered a man lying, bound and gagged, upon the deck, with a large grey cloth over his head and tied tightly round his neck. He quickly released the victim, and found that it was Rozaine, more dead than alive. Pinned to his coat was a card bearing these words:

Arsene Lupin accepts with thanks the 10,000 francs from M. Rozaine.

But in reality Rozaine's purse contained 20,000 francs.

Many of the passengers accused Rozaine of having simulated the attack against himself in order to avert suspicion. But it was proved that he could not have tied himself as he was when discovered, and, moreover, the writing on the card was quite different from his own. The writing was, in fact, exactly like the handwriting of Arsene Lupin as it appeared in a magazine found on board:

It was becoming clear, at last, that Rozaine was not Arsene Lupin; but that Arsene Lupin was aboard was now beyond all doubt:

A kind of panic seized the passengers. They dare not remain alone in their cabins, and walked about in groups on deck. Their excited imaginations attributed supernatural powers to the mysterious Arsene Lupin, and one and all became suspicious of everybody else:

The first messages received on nearing the American coast brought no news that could clear up the mystery. The fear that had seized Nelly Underdown had made her my constant companion, and in my heart I blessed Arsene Lupin for this:

The journey was rapidly nearing the end, and everybody was anxious to know whether the mystery of Arsene Lupin would be cleared up, and if so, how? Who was Arsene Lupin? Under what name did he travel? What strange mask hid the mysterious rogue? These were the questions that passed from lip to lip:

And soon the supreme moment arrived: If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget it:

The boat had drawn alongside, and the gangway was down. But before we could pass, the custom officials and other men in uniform and private clothes came aboard:

Suddenly I started, and as Nelly questioned me, I pointed out to her Ganimard, the celebrated police officer, coming across the gangway:

"Arsene Lupin is sure to be taken," Nelly exclaimed:

"Who knows?" I replied: "Ganimard has never seen Lupin, and the task is not an easy one."

"Ah," said Nelly, with that cruel curiosity peculiar to women; "I wish I could assist in the arrest."

The disembarkation commenced: Ganimard occupied a place near the gangway where he could see everybody plainly, and, by his side, was an assistant who now and again whispered some piece of information into his ear:

The Marquis de Raverdon, Major Rawson, and the Italian, Rivolta, passed the barrier, and many others besides: Then Rozaine approached: Poor Rozaine! He appeared haggard and depressed after his adventures:

"It is perhaps Rozaine after all," said Nelly: "What do you think?"

"I think that it would be very interesting to have Ganimard and Rozaine in the same photograph," I replied: "Will you kindly snap them with my camera as I am so overloaded?"

In a moment she had relieved me of my camera, and had taken the picture just as Rozaine passed under the nose of the police official without any interference:

Good Heavens, where could Arsene Lupin be?

There were now only about twenty people aboard, when I turned and said to Nelly:

"We will not wait any longer."

She went forward and I followed: But we had not gone a dozen steps when Ganimard barred our way:

"Hello, what's the matter?" I cried:

Ganimard examined me for an instant and then said:

"Look me straight in the eyes: Are you not Arsene Lupin?"

I began to laugh:

"No," I answered, quite simply; "my name is Bernard d'Audreyzy."

"Bernard d'Audreyzy died three years ago in Macedonia: How did you obtain possession of his papers? Please explain."

"But," I said, "you must be mad: Arsene Lupin embarked under the name of 'R——'."

"Yes, another dodge of yours, but it will not work this time. Now, Lupin, the game is up, so no more of this."

I hesitated a second, and then, with a heavy hand he hit me on the right forearm: I gave utterance to a cry of pain. He had struck me on the wound mentioned in the Marconigram:

There was nothing else to do but to be resigned:

Nelly listened, pale and trembling: Her look met mine and then fell upon the camera in her hand. She made a brusque gesture, and I felt that she understood the position at a glance:

Yes, it was inside the lining of the camera which I had intrusted to her hands that I had hidden the 20,000 francs belonging to Rozaine, and the diamonds of Lady Jerland:

I was in custody, but the proofs of my guilt were in the possession of Nelly. Would she betray me? Or would the memory of the happy hours we had passed together enlist her sympathy? It was an anxious moment!

She passed before me and I saluted her without a word: Amongst the few remaining passengers she made her way to the gangway, my camera still in her hand: Possibly she would not give it up in public; perhaps she would do so to-morrow, or the next day. My fate was in her hands.

When she had reached the middle of the gangway I saw her stumble forward, and at the same time the tell-tale camera, with its valuables, fell into the water and disappeared:

Then I watched her until her pretty figure became silhouetted, and finally disappeared in the distance. She had gone from me for ever!

For an instant I remained motionless, sad and relenting, then I heaved a deep sigh, to the astonishment of Ganimard, who said:

"You are landed at last: It is a pity, for that young lady's sake, that you are not an honest man."



The Festing of * * * * *

Marigold Elmsley.

By *FRANCES E. BURR.* * * * * *

An exciting tennis match and what came of it.

MIDSUMMER, glorious, dreamy mid-summer: Above, the sun shone brilliantly in the cloudless blue sky, flooding all the earth with its golden radiance:

From over the river, which glistened like a thread of silver in the distance, came the voices and laughter of haymakers, as they rested among the heaps of scented grass, to enjoy their simple midday meal.

The hush of noonday was everywhere, the songs of the birds had ceased, and all Nature for one brief period in the long, busy day seemed given up to rest and stillness.

The tennis courts at the Ilchester club wore a deserted look; the players, with almost one accord, declaring that a game was impossible in the intense heat.

Upon one only of the chalk-lined stretches of green was there any sign of life, and here a desperate battle was being fought between two combatants, who appeared alike unconscious of heat or fatigue.

The slender figure of a girl flew quickly hither and thither over the grass; her arm seldom failed, her eye never, she was eager with the excitement of the game, and had forgotten all else in the enthusiasm of the moment.

Her opponent, a tall, good-looking man of about four-and-twenty, moved rather more slowly, though no less gracefully. His interests were evidently not entirely centred in the game, for his glance fell more often upon the pretty figure of the girl opposite to him than upon the ever rising and falling ball. He played well, but with a certain recklessness, missing an easy opportunity at one moment, and at the next making up for it with one or two brilliant strokes.

"Thirty all—forty thirty—game—and set!" rang out the clear, triumphant voice of the girl at last. "There, Robin, I've beaten you for the first time in my life:

We'll stop now, and I will retire on my laurels. Come and sit down in the shade, and let us talk over the great victory!"

She waved her racquet exultingly, and led the way off the court, to a large chestnut tree, some few yards distant, whose thickly spreading boughs flung a grateful shadow on the grass beneath.

She settled herself comfortably on the soft turf, and touched the ground by her side suggestively: "Come and sit down, Robin," she repeated persuasively, and the young man, not slow to avail himself of the invitation, flung himself down beside her.

She was a pretty girl, with that sort of piquancy and ever-changing expression that never fails to charm: Her eyes, dancing, laughing, mischievous, seemed specially designed to fill the hearts of all beholders with admiration and despair.

Her red-brown hair had become ruffled with the morning's exertions, and here and there little rebellious curls strayed lovingly on to her delicate brow and neck:

For a few moments the silence remained unbroken; then the girl, turning to her companion with a quick gesture, roused him from his apparent reverie.

"You are extremely uninteresting just now, Robin," she said, with a little laugh. "I believe you are going to sleep: Wake up and tell me why you played so badly this morning, and what you were thinking of to allow a girl the pleasure of defeating you."

The man gazed dreamily into the thick network of leaves above him: "I can't tell you how it was, Marigold," he replied drowsily: "I was lazy, I suppose, and it is so confoundedly hot, you know. We have been playing since half-past nine this morning, so I was bound to let you have the satisfaction of beating me once."

Marigold sat up quickly and regarded him with mock anger: "What absurdly weak excuses!" she cried scornfully: "You were fairly beaten, so don't try to get out of it. If I can play for two hours and a-half, surely you can do the same; an Oxford 'blue,' and the best tennis player of your college: I don't know what you will do at the tournament next week if the heat upsets you so quickly!"

Robin listened to the teasing words with evident enjoyment and an unmoved countenance; he was used to this sort of thing, and expected it:

"You see, you were in wonderful form this morning," he replied, with imperturbable good humour. "The heat never troubles you in the least."

"Of course not, I love it," said the girl, laughing: "I am hardly ever too warm. When everybody else is grumbling over the dreadfully hot weather I am only just comfortable; it certainly is an advantage on such days as these."

"I wish you were my partner in the tournament," said Robin regretfully, with a glance of admiration at the charming little face. "We should just romp home together, you and I."

Marigold scattered a handful of grass over his curly hair: "My dear boy, I have every intention of 'romping home,' as it is," she remarked cheerfully: "I enjoy a game of tennis with you, Robin, you know, but if there is one thing I love better it is——"

"Yes—what?" cried the boy eagerly:

"Playing with Jack Somerville, of course," was the laughing answer. "I have a good idea, too, that we shall carry all before us next week."

"Confound him!" came a smothered exclamation, and Robin's face darkened ominously: "I believe you are always thinking about him."

Marigold opened her brown eyes innocently: "I beg your pardon," she said sweetly, "I did not quite catch the last remark: Perhaps you would not mind repeating it."

The boy's expression changed suddenly, and a pleading look came into his eyes.

"Oh, Marigold, can't you, won't you listen?" he cried earnestly. "Are you never serious? Can't you understand a little how I feel? You know——"

The girl made a petulant movement: "Don't begin it all over again, there's a dear boy," she said quickly: "I told you

last time I didn't know; I don't know now; do be content, and leave it."

"Yet it's always 'Jack' when I am with you," he said discontentedly: "Marigold, it's not encouraging, to say the least of it: I feel sometimes I could grind that doctor fellow to powder."

Marigold laughed again: "You had better not try, or he might prove too much for you," she cried merrily: "But seriously, Robin, I do wish you would let things be as they are: I can't marry you both, you know. Why can't we all three be good friends?"

She looked at him half-intreatingly, and stretched out her hands with the offer of comradeship, but Robin gazed gloomily at the toes of his shoes, and affected not to see the movement.

"We can't go on like that for ever," he said disconsolately, "it can't possibly last. It has got to be one or the other of us sooner or later."

"Then let it be later, I must have time to decide: You and Jack worry me so by proposing once a week on an average, that I never have time to think. I like you both, I've told you so, why can't that satisfy you for the present?"

"Because both of us are men, and because that sort of thing never will satisfy any man: Oh, Marigold, can't you understand?"

Marigold rose to her feet: "You would like me to come to a decision at once?" she said, a sparkle of mischief shining in her eyes: "Well then, Robin, I will, if you will promise to leave me in peace for one week. Listen, it is the club tournament next week: You and Jack are the two best players, as everyone knows, and are certain to be in the 'final,' I will marry whichever proves the winner. That will decide it once and for all."

She paused to watch the effect of her words, and was amused at his look of astonishment:

"I will marry the winner of the final, you or Jack," she repeated slowly and distinctly: "Don't stare at me like that, Robin; surely I have made my words plain enough."

"Marigold, do you really mean that?" broke in a third voice, low and eager: "Is that another of your many jokes, or are you, for once in your life, in earnest?" And turning quickly, Marigold beheld the tall, upright figure of Dr. Jack Somerville:

He took a few quick steps forward and stood confronting them, while he looked

from one to the other with questioning glance.

For one second hesitancy and indecision were visible in Marigold's expressive features, then she resolutely made up her mind to "stand by her guns," and allow herself no time for drawing back.

"I mean it," she repeated firmly, though she drew her breath a little quickly nevertheless. "I am serious, Jack, for once in my life. I did not know you were so near, of course, or perhaps I should not have said it just then, but I am none the less in earnest."

She repented her words after she had spoken, but it was one of her boasts that she never went back on anything she said, whatever the consequences.

"I am as serious as ever I was in my life," she declared emphatically. "I will marry whichever of you two wins the final next week."

She laughed a little uncertainly as she spoke, then, waving her hand in token of farewell, she turned and walked quickly away, leaving the two men staring at each other.

* * * * *

It was the last afternoon of the Ilchester tennis tournament, a cloudless day of blue sky and dazzling sunshine.

A gaily-dressed assemblage of spectators surrounded the court where the final in the gentlemen's singles was now proceeding.

Marigold Elmsley alone remained aloof from the throng, and took no part in the general excitement. She was oppressed by a vague feeling of disquietude which, as the game proceeded, increased almost to the verge of madness.

She had little thought that those mad words of hers would be taken so seriously, and that a matter of such grave importance would have grown out of what was little more than the jest of a Summer afternoon. She had spoken half impatiently and in a spirit of mischief, expecting Robin to laugh at the impossibility of such a wild suggestion, and to consent eventually to remain on the same friendly terms with her, without asking anything further. She had not counted on the appearance of Dr. Jack Somerville just at that moment.

Marigold rarely treated Jack with the same teasing familiarity to which she subjected Robin Gaston. She was always less frivolous and careless when in the presence of the somewhat grave young doctor. She knew, of course, the extent of

his love for her, but up to the present she had firmly put aside all offers of marriage, declaring that she must have time to decide.

Robin's numerous proposals she treated with a half-laughing indifference. It was always the same each time he came home from Oxford. He went back after each vacation declaring that she had broken his heart by her cruelty, but the next time they met he was ready to lay it at her feet again.

She was ashamed that Dr. Somerville should have heard those reckless words of a week ago, but having once uttered them she would not draw back, and she resolved firmly to abide by the consequences of the test of her own choosing.

The great moment had come. Jack Somerville and Robin Gaston had carried all before them in the tournament, and now the two champions were engaged in the final test of strength and skill. Jack's mouth was tightly shut in a determined manner, and his face was a shade paler than usual, but Robin wore a look of smiling confidence, and appeared happy and thoughtless as ever.

Marigold gazed with breathless fascination at the lithe, active figures.

Too well she realised at last the depth of her true feeling for Jack; now, too well, she knew that those grave, clear-cut features were dearer, far dearer to her, than the merry, laughing face of Robin, and she caught her breath quickly as she reflected how momentous was, to her, the issue of that apparently innocent game of tennis.

Jack was not playing his usual steady game. He looked anxious and ill-at-ease, and did not appear quite a match for Robin's somewhat showy and dashing play.

The latter was carrying all before him, his brilliant strokes were loudly applauded on every side, and his ultimate victory confidently prophesied by all present.

Marigold watched until she could watch no longer: The score was set all, while in the third and final set five games stood to Robin's credit against Jack's three, and the latter was perceptibly losing ground.

He would bear his defeat like a man, she told herself half-proudly. The subject she knew would never be mentioned again between them; he would be the same true friend, courteous and kind as ever, but deep in his heart there would be a little locked door of which she only would hold the key.

She looked at him with tender eyes, he was very near her side of the court

just then. A sudden thought crossed her mind, she would let him know at any rate that she cared just a tiny, tiny bit.

He bent down suddenly to pick up a ball, close to the very spot where she was standing. She leant forward slightly, and whispered, in tones so low that no one else could catch, the softly uttered words—"Jack, for my sake, win."

There was no time for a reply, he raised his eyes to hers with an answering smile, that was all. The next moment he was back in his place behind the service line, but there was a new light in his eyes, and an air of fresh determination had replaced his former desperate look.

From that moment the game changed; Jack's presence of mind returned, and he played as he had never played in his life before.

Slowly the score mounted. "Five all!" "Six all!" and "Seven all!" were in turn called by the umpire.

It was a fierce battle. Robin's look of confident success changed to one of surprise and even dismay as Jack's score equaled his own. True, Jack could not actually gain the lead, but as regularly as Robin scored a fresh game, he managed to obtain the next.

Marigold clasped and unclasped her hands in breathless eagerness and suspense, while again and again her eyes sought Jack's with mingled hope and fear.

"Eight all!" Clearly and distinctly the score rang out. Jack set his teeth in grim determination, and a firm resolve to put an end to the desperate fight.

Cautiously and deliberately he played, losing no opportunity, placing his balls with care and exactitude, and ever keeping his eye steadily upon his opponent.

A few moments more, and then again the score rang out: "Nine—eight, Somerville leads!"

The issue was soon decided; Robin grew reckless and endeavoured fruitlessly to take Jack off his guard, at the same time throwing away apparently easy chances, of which the latter was quick to take advantage. Then, almost before anyone realised it, the momentous game was at an end.

Jack, the victor, was surrounded in a few seconds by a crowd of eager friends, offering

congratulations, but Robin, with a white, set face, and a hard look in his eyes, walked quickly off the court and was soon out of sight of the merry throng.

* * * * *
Half-an-hour later, Jack discovered Marigold in her favourite nook by the river, whither, in a sudden rush of shyness, she had betaken herself at the close of the tournament.

Here, amongst the drooping willow trees, and in the half-light of the setting sun, she tearfully confided in him the sudden impulse that had prompted those wild words of hers, and her subsequent remorse when she realised the serious turn affairs had taken.

"But, oh, Jack," she concluded, a curious little break coming into her voice, "what should I have done if you had lost?"

Jack's eyes regarded her with unspoken admiration.

"I quite thought you loved Robin, and wanted him to win," he said tenderly, "and so I made up my mind to take my beating like a man. But, Marigold, can I ever tell you how your words encouraged me, and made me determine to win at all costs?"

"What should I have done if you had lost?" whispered the girl again softly: "Jack, you played splendidly, I am proud of you. But I am forgetting Robin," she said a little sadly, "his face looked so white and hard. Jack, do you think he minds very much?"

Somerville's face grew grave:

"Poor chap!" he said thoughtfully: "He will feel it rather badly for the next few weeks, I expect. But Robin's is a happy-go-lucky nature, so he will soon get over it, I hope, and be ready for the next flirtation that comes along."

Marigold was silent for some moments, apparently thinking deeply:

"It was very wrong of me ever to propose such a mad thing," she said presently: "It was a piece of midsummer madness, nothing more. But, Jack, it has taught me that I love you, and I know now that I have always done so, even when I said I did not care, so you will forgive me, won't you?"

And Jack's reply, although it was not expressed in words, seemed to afford Marigold immense satisfaction:



The Secret Guest.

By A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK.

NEW READERS MAY BEGIN HERE.

The narrator of this story, Timothy Peffer, lives with his aunt, who wishes him to marry a girl named Alice North. Alice, however, is secretly engaged to a certain Graham Stanton.

Timothy starts on a walking tour, and one evening, while on his way from Rottingdean to Newhaven, is attacked from behind and rendered unconscious. On coming to his senses he finds that he is lying in an old mill. In the distance he hears voices and the sound of digging. He looks about and sees two men—one old and one young—digging a grave, and from their conversation he gathers that it is for himself, though why they bear him a grudge he cannot imagine. They must have mistaken him for someone else.

Timothy escapes quickly from the mill and soon comes to a farmhouse. He is admitted by a girl, to whom he tells his story. When she hears it she becomes very agitated, and, without giving a reason, begs him to continue his journey at once. But he is too weak to go further, and the girl has just made him comfortable in an arm-chair when a voice is heard calling her by name—Doris. It is the voice of the older man who was digging the grave. He is here, then, in the next room, actually.

The two men go to bed without finding Timothy. Doris then hides him in an attic, where she explains that the men are her step-father, Mr. Chardon, and his son, and that they mistook Timothy for Graham Stanton, the ward of Chardon. Chardon has appropriated Stanton's money, and in fear of prosecution wants to get him out of the way.

Timothy is looking out of the attic window the next day and sees young Chardon in the yard below. Suddenly Chardon looks up, and Timothy wonders if he is discovered.

CHAPTER XVI:

Trapped in the Attic:

IT was no use trusting a preposterous hope that he had not noticed me;

I caught at it instinctively, but thrust it aside. He had seen me. I was practically alone in the house with him and that desperate old madman, his father; and yet, though I listened with a painful intentness, expecting every instant the menace of their hurrying tread on the stairs, the shock of this new disaster seemed to have so completely paralysed me that I could merely crouch below the window, incapable, for the nonce, both of thought and of motion:

But almost before I was aware of it, I was recovering myself, and casting about instinctively for a loophole of escape. Suppose I clambered out on to the roof, I had no means of descending, and if they followed and cornered me in such a precarious situation, I should be helplessly at their mercy; if I made a dash for it downstairs, I should run into them half-way:

Suddenly my glance fell on the two boxes standing one on the other by the wall, and as suddenly a wild resolution formed and fixed itself in my mind. The lower of the two was a big, oaken chest. If I could raise the lid of it and crawl in without displacing the other, there was the ghost of a chance that they might not think of examining the interior—it would seem, on the face of it, impossible that I could have concealed myself in the underneath box, and then have hoisted the other on top of it, and in the haste and excitement the practicability

of the simple scheme I had in view was scarcely likely to occur to them:

The impudent daring of it—though I did not really think of it as either impudent or daring until afterwards—the bare idea that, knowing I was detected, I should be fatuous enough to hide in the very room where one of them had seen me, would surely never strike them as feasible, and in that forlorn possibility lay my prospects of success. In that, and in a lightning recollection of the state of young Chardon's nerves, and of the frightened fancies that were haunting him:

Finding no obvious sign of me in the place, they might naturally conclude that the face he had surprised at the window was nothing more than another of those terrifying hallucinations that had been tormenting him all day:

While these thoughts were whirling through me, I had not been idle: I disposed of my bedding discreetly by scattering it among the general litter on the floor, and having removed all trace of my habitation, I heaved up the lid of the great chest, the upper box being saved from sliding off by the wall behind it, and with no little difficulty squeezed in, and, yielding to the weight above me, was at once shut tightly down:

Not a chink of light spied in on me anywhere: Lying cramped in the musty-smelling darkness, I was pressing my hands against the sides of my narrow prison, so as to turn myself into more of a crouching position, ready to spring out instantly if the lid opened, when I happened to touch the clumsy iron lock, and recognised the feel of it. There was just such a lock on an old

chest of my aunt's at home, and it was easy from the inside to slide the bolt backwards and forwards so as to fasten and unfasten it at will. It was rusty and stiff, but it gave under pressure, and I congratulated myself exultantly that by this locking myself in I not only doubled my defences but practically put my hiding-place beyond suspicion:

Everything had happened at such a rush that not a minute elapsed, I suppose, after I was seen at the window, before I was fastened in the chest, and, listening breathlessly, heard the two Chardons tramping about the room in search of me:

"Nobody here!" the old man snarled irritably. "What did I tell ye? It's nowt but another of yer blarmed nightmares! Ye want to mek me as big a fool as yerself with 'em, do ye?"

"He was standing here at the window," the other persisted shakily. "His head was bandaged. He was looking out, and he saw me, and—and disappeared."

"Like he's done when you've seen him afore to-day, eh?" the farmer laughed derisively. "If he was here, why aren't he here still? He couldn't ha' come downstairs without us seein' him; an' here's the place, just the same as it always is—where is he? If he was here we should see him, shouldn't we?"

As he spoke, the lid of the box above me banged noisily; he had evidently been peering into it:

"I don't care: I swear it was him," said young Chardon obstinately. "I saw him."

"An' you saw him clear enough to reckonise it was Stanton, even at that distance, did ye? Bah! You're in a blue funk, an' seein' what don't exist, same as you've been all day!"

"This is locked." The lid of the chest was jerked and shaken roughly. "The key's gone. Where's the key? What's in here?"

"Bah! You're fair crazed, boy! If it's locked how's any mortal man to get into it? Do ye reckon he nipped in an' locked himself in from the outside, an' then lifted this other atop of it? Break it open, if that'll please ye." A heavy boot kicked the panel near to my head. "There's nowt in there, I'll go bail! But break it open, lad, if it'll satisfy ye: I'm goin' out to find him in the fields afore it's too dark."

I heard him go growling and cursing downstairs; and, after a brief hesitation, perhaps because he was nervous at being up there alone, his son followed him:

The danger was averted, but there was no saying how soon they might come back: Young Chardon might induce the other, especially when they found nothing in the fields, to return and break open the lid of the chest, if it were only to make assurance doubly sure. Wherefore, even if the air in the chest had not been so oppressively close, it behoved me to enlarge myself and get out of the house while they were absent on their ghastly exploration:

I groped after the lock, put my fingers to the end of the bolt, and pushed—but it would not stir. Thinking it was the weight above that clamped it too tightly, I turned over so as to relieve the pressure by easing the lid up with my back, but still the bolt stuck, and no force or persuasion of my hands could shift it in the least degree:

I strove with it till the perspiration was streaming from my face, and the tips of my fingers were sore and bleeding; it defied all my efforts; and I had to desist at last, and sink back exhausted and half-stifled for want of air:

CHAPTER XVII:

Stanton's Arrival:

NO doubt I exaggerated my sensations; the horrible feeling of slow strangulation for want of air, the deadly faintness that I strove against intermittently—these and such-like symptoms were sometimes induced and always heightened by a sluggish imagination that the circumstances could not fail to stimulate.

I expected to be suffocated, and naturally experienced something of the agonies I anticipated. But even allowing for this, my position was undeniably precarious, and I did literally endure a torment and black fear of death that was potent enough to have racked the very life out of a more imaginative man:

After a while, I believe I now and then lapsed into fits of delirium and beat on the wood and shouted recklessly, till coming to a curiously abrupt realisation of what I was doing I checked myself, less now from a fear of the men from whom I had hidden, than from a dread that if I let myself go my brain would give way and I should collapse into shrieking lunacy:

Through these fluctuations I came at last to a sheer indifference of despair. I had thought, at first, of my friends in London; I had thought more continually of Deris, and

clung to a confident self-assurance that she would yet save me from this living tomb; but in the end I had forgotten even her.

I struggled no more, and was drifting unresistingly into deeper and deeper coma, when a stinging tingle of life quivered through all my being, and I was conscious, in some indefinable fashion, that I was not alone in the room. I heard no one enter; it was not so much any sound that reached me now, as a subtle influence that quickened through the deathly silence and woke me to an instinctive knowledge that somebody was passing beside me.

I knew too that it was Doris, though I cannot tell how I knew that. I stretched out my hand, half-expecting to be able to touch her, she seemed so near; then, remembering where I was, I called, and rapped with my knuckles:

Her answer was the merest whisper of an ejaculation, but the scrape of the upper box across the chest as she lifted it off satisfied me that she had guessed at my whereabouts, and in the ecstasy of that satisfaction I could have cried like a child, only I was ashamed of such a weakness.

Luckily there was a key of the chest among a bunch of rusty keys hanging out on the landing; and after a delay that seemed brief even to me, impatient as I was, the chest was opened and I was free.

The room was dark and I could not see her face; I could see only her figure sharply silhouetted against the cold greyness of the window. I could never convey to you any notion of the wonderful relief it was to step out and stand dizzily drawing deep breaths, and getting the dust and stuffiness of that awful box out of my system.

I could not speak; I could do no more for some few seconds than stand thus with Doris' arms to sustain me. I don't know what quality of gentle concernment it was in the clasp of her hand on my arm that wrought all my gustier emotions into one of high and exultant happiness; but I am sure that the shock of this last danger from which she had preserved me had broken down something more of the intangible barrier of maidenly reserve that had kept me at a distance. She did not shrink timorously from me now when I told her of my gratitude by mutely lifting her hand to my lips, nor did she coyly withdraw it when I held it still in mine, and folded it against my breast.

"I ought not to have stayed," said I. "I have let you run too much risk for me. It would have been far better if I had taken

my chance and gone at first, as you wished me to."

"You could not," she said.

"If I could not," I struck in, "I have been thinking, as I ought to have thought of it sooner—I have looked at it in a practical light, and I can see that it would have been wiser if I had gone straight to him when he came home last night. I daresay I should have done that, only I was in no state to realise exactly what I was doing. My one anxiety was to avoid him: But I should have considered what it might mean to you: I ought to have gone down to-day, at all events, and have faced him in broad daylight: The only thing was—I could not go away openly now without letting him know that somebody in the house had been helping me, and if he suspected you, after I was gone——"

"That would not have mattered," she said. "It isn't that. But you are thinking of him, and how he would act, as if he were an ordinary sane man, and he is not. Oh, if you saw him you would understand me! I am frightened of him, he looks and talks so wildly, so brutally; something dreadful will be the end of it all, if I do not prevent it, for now—I came up as soon as I could get away, to tell you—Mr. Stanton has come—he is downstairs with him now!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Nearing a Crisis:

"AND have you put him on his guard?"

"Not yet," she said: "He overtook my mother and me on our way back from church just now, and I was so taken unawares and so confused that we were indoors before I was able to make up my mind what to say."

"You have said nothing to Mrs. Chardon? Even she does not know I am here?"

"No. She is as worried as my father is over his dread of Mr. Stanton prosecuting him, and she is so entirely under his influence that—that I have not told her anything. She is distracted by the change that has come upon him, and if I told her the truth she could never hide it from him; she couldn't believe him capable of anything so bad, and would naturally think of his interests, you see, before everything, and so might harm both you and him without intending to."

Our simplest and sanest course would have been to call in the police and leave

them to deal with matters stringently before all interference was too late. But I could not urge Doris to take such a step as that, seeing what it must mean to her and to those of her family, and for the same reason I could not resolve to sneak out of the house and resort to such measures on my own responsibility, and in spite of her wishes.

"Stanton will have to be warned somehow," I said decisively.

"I have had no chance to speak to him alone yet," Doris resumed. "My father made a noisy show of welcoming him, and sits talking to him excitedly, and as if he did not mean to let him out of his sight. He is evidently puzzled that Mr. Stanton is uninjured and quite disposed to be friendly. He keeps asking him the same questions—What delayed him? Why he did not send word last night where he was staying? and so on, and I can see that my father only half believes his replies."

"What does he say delayed him yesterday?"

"He went with some friends to Brighton, instead of going direct to Newhaven, and they induced him to stay the night there: He intended to have sent a telegram, but forgot until too late, and reckoned we were used to his ways and would not be uneasy. My father has made him explain this several times already, and does not know what to make of it, I think. If he decides that he has attacked the wrong man, that is not likely to improve his temper."

"Am I so much like Mr. Stanton?"

"You are the same height and build, and I suppose in the darkness, and seeing you come up the road along which they were expecting him, they might easily mistake you for him."

"It must have been so," said I. "They would not see my face except when young Chardon came into the mill, and then he was scared and merely had glimpses of it by match-light, and it was so disfigured that the very slightest likeness to the man he was looking for must have been sufficient to mislead him."

But how events had reached their present sinister development was of less importance than how we were to prevent their developing further, and ending in irremediable tragedy.

I could suggest nothing better than that I should boldly descend and confront Mr. Chardon in the presence of his visitor; but Doris remained as strongly opposed to this as she had been at first.

She did not share my view that Stanton and I were a match for the other two, and that the fact of our facing them together would disarm them, for they would hardly attack one of us with the other there as a witness. She insisted that we could not depend on this. Her mother had said that Mr. Chardon carried a revolver; and Doris was positive that if cornered he would not hesitate to fire at us and then turn the weapon on himself, and no courage could safeguard us from such a headlong fury as that.

Her plan was to find, if possible, an opportunity to speak with Stanton apart; she shrank from telling him that her father designed to murder him; but she might warn him that, as was sufficiently obvious, Mr. Chardon had been drinking heavily for some while past, and shown such symptoms of homicidal mania that they would sooner he made excuses to go away and put up for the night elsewhere, or, if he were not to be got rid of, she could impress on him the advisability of barricading himself in his bedroom, which had no lock on its door.

"But if you are not able to get an opportunity to say this to him?"

"The only thing I can think of in that case is that you should go down and stay in his room and warn him as soon as he comes up. If you explained everything to him, he would believe you, and you said you thought you might have influence with him—on account of Miss North—and could induce him to promise not to prosecute my father, but give him time to replace the money he has lost. Then, if you could get him to leave the house with you and write to my father, it might all be put right."

It was a puerile scheme, you may say, but there was a kindly, conciliatory quality in it that rather appealed to me; besides, it was the course Doris preferred.

"Where is his room?" I asked. "Once I can see Stanton and we can work together, I have no doubt we shall soon put things straight, and you may trust me to see that we do it without bringing disgrace or any avoidable trouble on your father."

We were interrupted by a voice from below calling her.

She hastily described to me the position of Stanton's room:

"I expect they are just sitting down to supper," she added. "If you come down in five minutes there is hardly the least risk of your meeting anyone. If there is, I will run back and tell you."

CHAPTER XIX.

The Plan that Failed.

SHE was back in a twinkling, not to stop me, but to say that everybody was at supper, as she had thought, and I could get to Stanton's room without being intercepted. . Then she gave me her hand, for the upper stairs were unlighted, but though every moment was precious, I was not such a miser of them that I hesitated to squander two or three while I asked her a question, for I should have been wretched had I gone away leaving it unasked.

"If Mr. Stanton and I think it best to quit the house quietly in the night, I shall not be able to see you in the morning," I said, "but may I come and ask for you some day, when all this is blown over, or if I write—may I write, and will you write to me?"

I felt her hand tremble in mine, and after a pause that seemed endless, but really ended almost immediately, she whispered "Yes." Whether she meant it as a reply to one or both of my questions I neither knew nor cared; that little tremble of her hand, and some exquisitely shy tenderness in her tone, was more than enough to satisfy me. I asked nothing else and detained her no longer, but walked down softly in her steps, still keeping her hand in mine, till we reached the half-landing overlooking the hall, and there we parted.

As I stepped into Stanton's room and shut the door on myself, I was oppressed with a miserable, unaccountable presentiment that she and I had met and parted for the last time.

It was not good to start on such an undertaking as I was entering upon under these discouraging auspices, but the exigencies of the situation braced me, for the nonce, to thrust them aside.

I struck a match and saw that I was in a large, substantially-furnished room; there was an immense, old-fashioned wardrobe at the other end of it, but my recent adventure in the oak chest had disinclined me to shut myself up anywhere again in a hurry. There was a chair on the far side of the wardrobe, and I could sit in this and be entirely hidden from anyone who did not walk right in across the floor, and I did not anticipate that anyone would do that to-night but Stanton himself.

As soon as he was inside, and had closed the door, my purpose was to make him briefly acquainted with the object of my

presence, allaying any doubt he had of me, at the outset, by a reference to Alice North, and then to concert measures for unraveling the tangled web in which both he and I had become inmeshed.

Having roughly settled on my line of conduct, I scarcely gave another thought to it. I knew exactly how to act directly Stanton was here, and until he came there was nothing further to do.

I was thinking of Doris in the farmhouse kitchen under the eyes of the men we were seeking to thwart, and quietly hiding from them the secret that was hers and mine. I was thinking how inexpressibly dear she had grown to me, and how in this last bewildering day and a half we had come to as intimate an understanding of each other as if we had been acquainted many years, when a murmur of genial voices roused me; there was silence, then a sound of footsteps, and I divined that Stanton had said good-night and was coming upstairs alone.

The door opened and closed, and there was a light in the room. Peering round the wardrobe, I scrutinised a youngish man of my own build, and much of my own general appearance. He flung a bag into a corner, took off his coat and hung it on a peg behind the door, and stood fumbling in the pockets.

And stupidly enough I selected this moment, while his back was towards me, to emerge from my concealment. I stepped out, and coughed slightly to attract his attention, and, to discount the startling effect my sudden appearance would have on him, forthwith proceeded to introduce myself.

"There is no need for alarm," I began in emphatic whispers. "I am here to warn you that your life is in danger——"

He had flashed a panic-stricken glare on me, and before I could get out another word he tore the door open and cried, all in a tremble with excitement:

"Who are you? What are you doing here?"

I rushed at him with my hand up to implore silence, but he must have misconstrued my looks and actions, for, though he stood his ground, he made as if preparing to grapple with me and shouted lustily over his shoulder:

"Mr. Chardon! Quick! Here is some scoundrel got into my room. Mr. Chardon! Stand back!" He threw me violently aside as I made a frantic grab at him. "I don't know whether you're mad or drunk, but, by Heaven! if you lay a hand on me it'll be the worse for you!"

CHAPTER XX.

At Bay.

I COULD have cursed him roundly, his perversity was so exasperating. I clutched him by the arm and held on to him despite his struggles; I poured out a terrifying summary of what I had to say to him, but poured it out in a torrent of whirling words that must have sounded like a mere incoherent babble to him, for his shoutings and his opposition to me never slackened.

Our ridiculous conflict was at its loudest, when, with a clatter of stumbling feet and mutter of ejaculatory questions, Chardon and his son were upon us. I had a startling vision of the old man's furious face, its mane of tousled grey hair, its flaming, bloodshot eyes, and, before I could lift a hand to ward off his headlong approach, he closed a grip of steel on me.

"Take him down," he roared to his son. "Keep him in the room there till I join ye." The next instant his son had me by the collar and hustled me unceremoniously downstairs. Resistance was out of the question, it was as much as I could do to keep my feet; the younger villain was pretty well as muscular as the older one, and I felt as powerless as a child when I tentatively measured my strength against his. He dragged and harried me into the big living room, and, dropping me into a chair, stood threateningly over me.

"Where did he come from?" I heard the old man demand blusterously without.

"What was he after?"

"I don't know," Stanton protested. "I turned round and found him in my room."

"But how did he get there?"

"Haven't the least notion. Directly I saw him, he made a run at me, shouting some gibberish, I couldn't make head or tail of it. Drunk, I should think he is."

"Maybe so—maybe," said old Chardon; then snatching, as I guess, at a fiendish inspiration, he added confidently: "The chap's well-known about these parts. He's a natural. No harm at most times, but liable to queer fits now and then, and I reckon he's got one of 'em now. He meant doin' you a mischief. I've said afore, he ought to be under control, an' arter this I'll see as he ain't free to wander this fashion, anyway, frightenin' the lives out o' folks an'—why, suppose he'd laid low an' come on you when you was asleep, where would you ha' been, eh?"

"If he's as dangerous as that——"

"At times he is, an' at times no wuss nor any other daftie. He's well enough known around here, but he's gettin' too much of a nuisance lately, an' I'll complain arter this an' have him put away, if his people can't tek care of him."

"How did he get into the house?"

"Goodness knows! He's always prowlin' about, an' most times nobody troubles with him, but he's give you a bit of a scare."

"It would scare anybody to turn round and see behind him——"

"Why, yes—yes. But you've no call to worry. Get ye to bed, lad; ye'll not have him interferin' with ye agen this night, I'll tek heed o' that."

"What are you going to do with him? Can I help you?"

"Not at all, lad. Get ye to bed. If George an' me aren't enow to attend to him——" He broke off with a laugh. "We'll send him home, or lock him in one o' the sheds till mornin'. We can manage easy, never fear. Good-night."

He closed the door, and I heard him descending.

By this time I had got my wits together a little. I had attempted once to rise, but my captor thrust me back with a vehemence that assured me he was not to be trifled with. I had started to shout to Stanton, but he clapped a rough hand over my mouth and took me by the throat till every vein in my head throbbed as if it would burst. He released me at last, with a caution, and I was still limp and voiceless from his throttling when the older man lurched in and turned the key.

For a trying interval he glowered on me blackly, then turned to his son.

"Where's that revolver o' mine?" he demanded.

"I don't know."

"No lies, now!" cried the father truculently. "I left it on the dresser yonder afore supper. If you haven't taken it, who has?"

"On my oath I haven't touched it! I didn't know you'd put it out o' yer pocket."

The old man eyed him viciously, but dropped the dispute and turned again to me.

"Now then," he snarled, "who are you, and how do yer come here?"

I saw it was worse than useless to reason with him, and the very hopelessness of my case goaded me into some show of defiance.

"I am the man you tried to murder on the road yonder last night," I said.

"Oh?" he sneered. "You're sure it was me that tried to, are you?"

"I saw you from the window of the mill," I said flatly, "while you were digging. If I hadn't come round in time to crawl away and dodge you, I should have been under the ground now with a sack of quicklime over me. I heard you say so."

"If you knew all that, how come you to be such a fool as to be here in my house?"

"I didn't know it was yours."

"Didn't know? What d'yer mean?"

"It was the first house I came to when I was running away from the mill, and I was too weak to go further."

"Who let you in?"

I have the dullest imagination in the world, but I had already foreseen this inquiry, and, at all costs, was determined not to let any suspicion fall on Doris.

"Nobody. I didn't come in," I said boldly. "I crept into one of your outhouses and hid there. This morning I came out and had got to the front door when I caught sight of you across the field near by. I was too broken to run, and if I had tried it, you were pretty sure to look round and see me before I had gone far, so I chanced it. I slipped into the house, and got upstairs and into that room, meaning to go away quietly after everyone was in bed to-night."

I was pleased with my ingenuity in devising so plausible a story on short notice, and if there were flaws in it they were not calm enough to detect them.

I dreaded that it might occur to them that my head was more efficiently bandaged than I could have done it for myself, but this did not appear to strike them.

"It comes to this," said Chardon, with a grim sullenness, "I can see now that when we first meddled with you we made a mistake; when we didn't mек sure of yer while we was about it, we made another, but I'll tek me oath we don't mек no more!"

CHAPTER XXI:

In the Balance.

I THINK I was responsible for what followed immediately on his words.

He was blustering, as such bullies will be, and letting himself go in terms that were more portentous than his thoughts. But no man placed in my circumstances could have been sufficiently indifferent to weigh the value of his language. I gave it its surface value and was so far intimidated

that, anticipating a precipitate attack, I sprang up, hurled the younger man aside, and, shouting frenziedly, rushed to the door.

But it was a waste of energy. Before I could turn the key they were both upon me. I kicked, and bit at the leathery hand that was clapped over my mouth, but they hauled me back into the chair, and, despite my reckless resistance, I was bound hand and foot, with a great towel twisted tightly round the lower part of my face and knotted behind my neck in such a fashion as to gag me and render breathing a matter of difficulty.

"By gosh!" the old man spluttered, shaking a giant fist at me, "if I'd had my revolver I wouldn't ha' wasted no time puttin' a rope round yer! . . . There's got to be an end o' this. Gi' me the revolver."

"I haven't got it. If I had I wouldn't give it up. I'm not goin' to ha' nowt to do wi' more bloodshed," said young Chardon doggedly.

"That's for me to say, an' I say there's no help for it," cried the old man. "You're in this as deep as I am. What's goin' to happen, yer fool, if this feller goes clear, an' puts the police on us, eh?"

"Let him take his oath not to," urged the other. "He'll promise that, won't he, to save his life?"

He glanced at me, and I nodded vehemently.

"I wouldn't trust his word, not if he swore on all the Bibles as were ever printed," raged the elder Chardon implacably. "He knows about the one upstairs, an' if he disappears d'yer think he won't be tellin' what he'll reckon has become of him? We've got to think of ourselves, an' the only chance for us now is to sweep both of 'em out of our way."

"Here they are," he went on, with cold-blooded calculation; "nobody knows this feller's here but you an' me, an' Stanton, who needn't count when we've finished. He vanishes—an' who's to suspect us?"

"But they know Stanton's here."

"Who does? Doris an' the mother; an' once the job's done they'll be as anxious to hush it up as you will. That's why I hit on the notion o' chargin' the two gels wi' robbin' me this arternoon an' packin' 'em off home bag an' baggage. They thowt I wor mad, but I'm none so mad as not to understand my own game. I seen it would be no bad thing to have the house to ourselves for a day or two, an' I was right, wasn't I?"

"I don't care—I'll have no hand in it. It's too horrible!"

"Not so horrible as being flung into prison and all for usin' money that should ha' been my own! It's waste o' good time chatterin' of it!" His eyes met mine and he addressed himself to me again truculently: "It's every man for himself i' this world. You've pushed yourself in where ye'd no right to be—ye know more than I can afford to let ye go on knowin' an', sakes alive! you've got to pay for it. Now then, George, if ye won't hand up the revolver a knife'll do the business!"

"Don't ye be in too much haste, father." The son held him by the arm. "Not to-night. You're not yerself——"

"Don't stand jabberin' at mc—say what yer mean?"

"The drink's maddened ye," persisted the son earnestly. "Take time. Don't do nowt while you're like this, or when you're yerself agen an' can think, ye'll never forgive yerself."

"Bah! Did ye ever find me chicken-hearted, drink or no drink? My brain's a sight clearer than yourn! Loose my arm, I'm in no mood to be played wi'!"

"But listen—there may be that letter from the London lawyer in the mornin'. If that comes an' you can put everything right—it'll be too late if you have yer own way to-night. Hear reason, for Heaven's sake!" He was clinging to the other's sleeve, and would not let go even under the smart of a sharp blow on the face. "You said yerself if the London lawyer would lend ye the coin you could put it all straight, an' you're expectin' to hear from him either way in the mornin'—you said so yerself. Try every other chance afore you do what you may wish undone to-morrow."

For awhile the old man furiously disregarded his passionate arguments; twice he broke away, and each time the son closed with him again, never for an instant ceasing his appeals, until by degrees the full force of them seemed to gain upon Mr. Chardon, and he quieted somewhat.

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CHAPTER XXII:

The Darkest Hour.

"YOU say yerself, I'm as much in this as you are," the son went on persuasively, "and I don't want him to go an' give us both away, any more than you do. But I don't want us to shove

our heads in a noose an' then, if that lawyer writes to-morrow an' can let you have the brass, find that it wasn't necessary. If you get the money who's goin' to believe his cock-an'-bull story if we both say we know nowt about it?"

"Well, maybe that's sense," Mr. Chardon growled ruminantly. "No use mekin' matters wuss till we're sartin we can't mek 'em no better, eh? At all events we shan't lose nowt by a day's delay, an' whatever trouble I mek, you've got to bear your share, an' so you're entitled to a voice in what's to do. It shall be as you say. We'll do nothin' afore mornin', an' if the letter is satisfactory, we'll let this feller go, an' chance it, an' the other's had no cause for complaint. That's what we'll do, George. You're right. But where are we to put this one for the night?"

"Plenty o' places. One o' the outhouses might—— Or there's the attic, where I thought I'd seen the other one this evenin'——"

"That'll do. That shall be the plan. An' now that revolver o' mine—hand it over. It shan't be used afore to-morrow, you may take my word for that."

"But I haven't got it. Dunno where it is—I swear I don't."

For a moment Mr. Chardon scrutinised him fiercely, and with a sinking of the heart I waited for him to flare again into uncontrollable fury, but quite suddenly he turned his back on his son, and standing squarely in front of me shook an admonitory finger close before my face.

"Listen to me, young feller," he said grimly, "you've mixed yerself in what's no concern of yourn an' you'll ha' to tek the consequences."

I nodded, speech being impossible to me.

"Good. Well, you've heard I'm willin' to give you a last chance. There's a letter I'm expectin' in the mornin'—I don't hope anythin' from it, but my son does, an' he'd rayther we waited to see, so we'll wait. Even if it brings good news—it's precious little good to me. I've still got to lose money that should ha' been mine, an' shall be hangin' a debt round my neck for the rest o' my days, when I could save everything if I wasn't cursed wi' a son who's no more pluck than a rabbit."

He shook his fist and lapsed into a muttered thunder of half-inarticulate blasphemy.

"You've passed your word to wait till to-morrow," the younger man reminded him sullenly, "an' if it's necessary to—

morrow, I'll stand by you in whatever's got to be done."

"You swear that?"

"I do. I'm ready to go as far as you when necessary, but not before."

"I shall hold you to that," said Mr. Chardon curtly, and then turned again to me: "I'm goin' to tek them ropes off yer feet an' you'll walk upstairs. You won't do yerself no good by tryin' to rouse anyone. My wife's too hard of hearin'; my daughter sleeps up the other stairs on the far side of the house; an' if you disturbed Mr. Stanton, I've only to repeat what I've told him about you a'ready, an' he'll assist us: Go quietly, an' you'll have whatever chance that letter may be bringin' you to-morrow, but you start rowin'—"

I had no choice but to obey.

The son went up to ascertain that the light was out in Stanton's room, then they conducted me upstairs and into the same littered attic in which I had slept the night before. Not a word was uttered by the way, and I was careful to go silently. The old man carried the spare rope with him, and motioning me to sit on one of the smaller boxes, he deftly wound the cord round my legs again and knotted it.

"He'll be easier lyin' down," he muttered:

And with that they lifted me and laid me on the floor, and so left me in the darkness. I heard the key turn, and the careful tread of their feet, then the silence closed in, and I began to feel already as if my life were all behind me.

I shut my eyes and tried not to look forward or backwards; but thoughts came streaming in on me, in spite of myself, in grotesque disorder.

What tormented me more than anything else was that I had not contrived to deter those murderous brutes from their project by making it clear to them that if they did complete the crime they contemplated it must inevitably be traced to them.

They were under the impression that Stanton and I were complete strangers to each other, and that though inquiries might be made at the farmhouse for him, no one would dream of expecting to gather news of me there.

They were taking it for granted that the simultaneous disappearance of Stanton and myself would not focus suspicion on them unless we were both traced into the same neighbourhood and all trace of us lost there. This latter contingency was, to their thinking, too remote to be worth consideration,

for they did not know that I had yesterday deposited my knapsack and given my name at my lodging in Rottingdean, nor that Stanton was engaged to Alice North, and that she, hearing simultaneously of the disappearance of both of us, and knowing that by yesterday we should both have arrived in the same locality, would be led to connect the two incidents so that they would seem part of one tragical event, and thus take on such sinister significance that a few inquiries would be pretty sure to bring the diabolical outrage home to the guilty scoundrels who were buttressed so secure in their ignorance.

If I could have communicated these facts to them they must have recognised the futility of what they were preparing to do. Or had they been aware that Doris knew of my presence at the farm, and entertained, as I hoped, some regard for me, they could never have gone on in such blind confidence, that, once they had accomplished their purpose, she and her mother would, woman-like, recoil from delivering them up to the gallows.

Of course I should not have told them this of Doris, in any case, but that did not alter the exasperating fact that I must lose my life solely because they were ignorant of these flaws in their design.

Lying thus tormented in that intolerable night, I presently found myself reverting to a vision of the ominous, prowling figure of Mr. Chardon, and the sudden inhumanity to which he had brought himself; I drifted into idle speculations as to what had become of his revolver, and why he had been so anxious to have it, even after he had agreed to do nothing till to-morrow. Was his agreement a pretence to hoodwink his timorous son, and had he some cunning intention of accomplishing his aim unaided and unimpeded, and then readmitting his son into his confidence when there was nothing left for him to oppose?

Which of them had locked my door and kept the key?

Listening intently, I thought I could hear footfalls on the landing without, and straining my eyes towards the door I was more than once convinced that I saw it opening, and momentarily expected to perceive the crouching form of the pitiless old man who was resolved upon my destruction tiptoeing in on me.

It was curious that I had miserably resigned myself to the death that awaited me in the morning, and yet the prospect of

being suddenly set upon and murdered in the night could shake me with unnameable fear.

But my fears again and again proved groundless till, at last, a growing numbness of mind protected me from their attacks, as a numbness of body renders one insensible to cold. So that when, after I don't know how long an interval, I did indubitably hear the latch turn, my heart sickened, I was deaf with the drumming of my pulses in my ears, but all my emotions were exhausted; I was conscious only of a weak yearning that the end might come quickly and without pain.

The sound was not repeated; I could not catch the slightest rustle of movement from without, and eventually persuaded myself that I had not really heard anything, that my over-excited imagination had been cheating me once again.

Hence it smote me with more of a shock when, turning for the hundredth time to gaze into the sky for some first bleak hint of daybreak, I beheld a dark shadow at the window. I heard the catch shoot up with a sharp click; the casement swung inwards, a cool wind played in on my face, and, as silent as death itself, the shadow entered.

* * *

CHAPTER XXIII.

What the Dawn Brought.

AND after all it was the dawn coming in at my window—not the dawn I had been looking for, but one that was far better, for it brought me life instead of death.

It was too unexpected and too good to be readily believed, and I don't think I really understood that Fortune was giving me back everything just when I thought she was taking everything away, until that detestable towel was unwound from across my face, and I could feel that I was actually free.

Then I knew it was Doris who had freed me; her arms had raised me, my head was resting in her lap, and she was leaning over me. I heard her voice vaguely, as one hears voices in a swoon, but it roused and restored me, and I was able to answer.

"I had given myself up for lost," I said. "I thought you did not know where I was. How did you find out?"

"I could not sleep," she returned. "I was looking out of my window thinking I

might see you and Mr. Stanton when you went away. Not seeing you, I grew uneasy; and as I came down and opened the door at the foot of the staircase that leads up to my room, I saw a light. I crept up the side passage into the hall in time to see you going upstairs with my father and my brother. I was nearly screaming, I was so frightened, and did not know what they were going to do. But I followed, and when I saw them lock you in here, I slipped down swiftly and they did not see me. I knew my father had not his revolver—I took it away when he laid it aside this evening. They went back into the kitchen, and from what they were saying I made out all that had happened. As soon as they were gone to bed, I came up and tried the door, hoping they had left the key, but they hadn't. So I got a ladder—the house is not high, you know—and climbed up to the window. You can get out the same way," she added, "and be beyond their reach before morning."

"But what shall you do?" I asked.

"Oh, I shall be safe enough——"

"You cannot be sure of that," I interrupted. "They will know I could not have broken these cords and escaped—they will guess it was you who helped me, and your father will never forgive you—he is mad enough to shoot you in his rage. . . . No, I am not going to leave you to face him alone—I'm not such a coward as that, Doris!"

"But it will be worse if you stay," she insisted. "I am not afraid, and he would not——"

"There is no saying what he wouldn't do," I cried. "I won't let you run the risk. Either I stay and we will meet him to-morrow together, or—Doris, you must come with me."

"Come with you?" she faltered.

The suggestion was unpremeditated; the idea flashed upon me while I was speaking, and the more I pleaded and reasoned with her the more convinced I became that it was the most rational course we could take.

I am not hot-headed as many men are, but in my eagerness to persuade her I forgot all my natural self-restraint, and poured out my heart to her with a passion and intense ecstasy that I had not thought I was capable of. I can't think precisely what I said to her, but it all resolved itself into this—that I loved her, that I had loved her from that strange first moment of our meeting, and should love her till I died; and that, whatever the consequence to me, I would never

leave her there alone to confront the danger from which I was running away. She said it was impossible; she could not come; and she continued to say it, but each time with less and less of emphasis.

She owned with a single shyly-whispered word that she loved me; I wrung the answer from her; and then I took advantage of her tenderness and her care for my welfare—I pointed out the peril to which I exposed myself by remaining; I asked if she would not despise me if I deserted her; and always I came round again to a decisive assertion that I could not and would not go unless she came with me.

Thus, by little and little, her firmness gave way before mine. I even pointed out that our both escaping would be the salvation of Stanton.

"I will write a letter which we will leave for your father, telling him that by the time he reads it you and I will be with my friends in London," I urged. "I will tell him that if any harm happens to Stanton I will denounce him to the police. He won't injure Stanton if I am beyond his reach and able to give evidence against him, for what benefit could he get by it? I will tell him, too, that if he explains things frankly to Stanton, I will guarantee that Miss North will use her influence with him, and he will be willing to accept part of what is due to him, and give your father time to pay the remainder, and that as for my sufferings—I shall forgive him for your sake, Doris."

"You see," I repeated conclusively, "at a distance, out of his clutches, we have the whip hand of him: I won't go without you, Doris. It is Stanton's life that is at stake, as well as my life and my happiness."

"But your friends," she wavered, "what will they say—"

"My friends!" I ejaculated. "Why, when I tell them how you have saved my life and only consented to come with me because I absolutely refused to go without you, but would have stayed and died here—what can they say? I have no relative but my aunt to consider, and I am positive she would despise me if I left you here at the mercy of that madman—she will love you, Doris, and welcome you and be glad to have you make your home with her till"—I drew her to me and lowered my voice as if there had been anyone to hear it but her—"till we have a home of our own."

We had lost too much time already; and seeing I was obdurate and gave her no alternative, she yielded—not in so many words,

but I construed her silence as I willed, and prepared to be going.

Standing in the window to obtain such feeble light as was available, I penciled my note to Mr. Chardon, and folded and addressed it. Then, taking her assent as irrevocable, I helped Doris out at the casement and followed her down the ladder.

"I must go in for my hat," she whispered, when I reached the ground beside her, "and to put your letter where my father will see it first thing in the morning."

"Don't be more than five minutes, then," I implored her, "or I shall be afraid something has happened and come to look for you."

* * *

CHAPTER XXIV.

A New Day.

BUT nothing happened. She rejoined me carrying a small bag, of which I tacitly relieved her, and we set out across the desolate, dim fields towards the high road.

Once I glanced back, and seeing the quiet farm brooding among the shadows, it seemed strange that so peaceful-looking a place could hold within its four walls such nightmare horrors as we were running from.

We walked through Rottingdean while the little village was still asleep, and the dawn overtook us as we were stepping briskly along the road above the cliffs, with the lights of Brighton twinkling far ahead.

The chilly, solitary streets of Brighton echoed to our hasty tread soon after four o'clock, but we had to wander about there for awhile, haunted by fears of pursuit and recapture, and then to wait an interval at the station, for the earliest train to London did not start till past six.

Doris was still doubting wistfully whether she was doing right to accompany me, but my masterful obstinacy was unabated, and I think that the feeling that she was not coming so much out of her love for me, as because I was so firm and compelled her to obey me, comforted her.

I don't think either of us felt that our troubles were over until the train started; and even then I was not without a suspicion that Doris was fretted by a nervous doubt whether, for her, certain indefinable new troubles were not about to begin, and I was touched with repentance that I had been so autocratic with her; and yet I could not be sorry that she was seated beside me.

She was very sweet, and shy, and gentle, and though when I kissed her and passionately reiterated how deeply and truly I loved her, she hid her face against my coat and cried a little, she hushed my self-reproaches by saying emphatically that it was not because she was unhappy, and she even confessed again, to ease my conscience, that she did really love me and would rather go with me now than return and never see me any more.

My first act after we alighted at Victoria was to furnish myself with a hat; then we went to a quiet restaurant and had breakfast, and later, when all the boarders had gone off to the City, we astonished my Aunt Betty by walking suddenly in upon her.

Her astonishment at our appearance—Doris wan, tired, and tearfully nervous, myself unwontedly self-assertive and with my head bandaged—was eclipsed by her astonishment at the narrative I had to unfold. She was simply appalled; and I was relieved and delighted that her gratitude to Doris was immediate and unstinted.

Indeed, her praise of Doris outsoared even mine; and when I proceeded to describe how we had fled together, and to explain that Doris had come solely out of consideration for me, because I would have stayed and been killed if she had refused, I was still more relieved to find that my aunt accepted it all, not only with equanimity, but as if I could not possibly have acted otherwise in the circumstances.

In short, she took to Doris at once, and made her as welcome as I had said she would, though when I said it I had not really believed my own assertion. There was but one thing I kept back from her: I breathed no word of my love for Doris, being yet a little shy about that, but by some remarkable intuition she must have divined it, for when she and I were alone in the basement sitting-room, she observed, with a sigh:

"Well, I suppose it was to be, Tim! I can't help feeling the least bit disappointed about it, but I like her, and I can't blame you—considering— Dear me, whoever would have dreamt that such things could occur in these days! I'm afraid poor Alice will feel rather slighted!"

"I don't think she will, aunt," I answered, "I don't think she ever cared for me—not in the way you mean; and I never cared and never could have cared for her as I do for Doris."

"Ah well, my boy, you are old enough

to know your own mind, and so long as you marry someone I like and am happy," said my aunt, "that is all I am anxious about. But I don't know what Alice will say!"

I saw Alice during the day, and, with her permission, afterwards told Aunt Betty that in any case I could not have obeyed her wishes, for Alice rejected me before I set out on my holidays and had been, in fact, engaged to another man for several months past. She bridled at hearing this; it removed every shadow of fault from me, and she seemed quaintly pleased that I had vindicated myself by finding a wife elsewhere so expeditiously.

I wrote that evening a long, conciliatory letter to Mr. Chardon. I wrote also to Graham Stanton, disclosing the position of affairs, and pleading with him, in Alice's name, and for Doris' sake and mine, to be lenient and allow his rascally guardian time to make good his defalcations, instead of prosecuting him and so sacrificing money that probably might otherwise be gradually refunded.

We worried through twenty-four hours of anxiety before Stanton's reply came to end our suspense. He had no desire to adopt harsh measures, he said, and had already discussed matters with Mr. Chardon and come to an agreement that was, on the whole, satisfactory to both of them.

It seemed that when he read my note and discovered that Doris and I were missing, the old man had flown into such an outrageous fury that his son and certain of the farm hands had resorted to force to restrain him; Mrs. Chardon, without consulting him, sent for the doctor, and a sleeping-draught administered diplomatically reduced him to harmlessness. From his incoherent ravings Stanton had already gathered a dim inkling of the truth, that to some extent prepared him for the statements in my letter and reconciled him the more readily to my conciliatory proposition, and in the year that has passed since then he has seen no reason to regret his clemency.

For all these are the happenings of a year ago, and nothing of them remains to me except memories, and Doris, who makes them all worth remembering. We have been married six months now, and I am happy enough to satisfy even my Aunt Betty, who has grown so fond of my wife that I should certainly be jealous if I didn't know that she can't help it any more than I can myself.

THE END:

The Two Mirrors.

By M. S. M.

In which is related the part that two looking-glasses played in a love affair.

NURSE BYFORD had been at a wedding. There was a soft flush on her cheek and an unwonted light in her grey eyes, as she came back into her patient's room.

Miss Mussen raised her head at the sound of the opening door.

"What a time you have been, Nurse!" Her tone was fretful.

"Did it seem so very long, you poor dear? Well, we don't have a wedding every day!" Nurse Byford began to smooth the tossed bed-clothes with deft fingers as she spoke.

"Tell me about it, Nurse—it is so dull lying here," the old lady sighed drearily.

Nurse Byford sat down on the low chair by the bedside and folded her hands over her snow-white apron. A demure smile played round her lips.

"It is an odd thing, Miss Musser," she said, "but it was I who made the match. Would you believe I could do such a thing?"

A flicker of interest lighted the old lady's dull eyes.

"You, Nurse Byford?"

"Should you like to hear the story? There will be no harm in telling it now—they're safely married."

The little old maid's face flushed eagerly, as she turned her head on the pillow with her best ear cocked up like a watchful terrier's; she was not going to lose a word of the story if she could help it.

Every woman, they say—married or unmarried—loves a romance; this little, faded, wrinkled bit of cranky womanhood was no exception to the rule; nor was the placid, sweet-faced nurse, with her grave eyes and smooth bands of grey hair, who began her story, speaking with a tinge of pride in her tone:—

They were both patients of mine, when I was working at the surgical home in Welsford. Mr. Longhurst came in first with a broken knee-cap. He got a bad fall playing

polo in the Park, and was brought straight in to us. He has a nice place outside Welsford, and is very well off, I think. He has no near relations, and seemed a very shy, reticent sort of man, not the least bit romantic or impressionable, but you never know!

A few days later Miss Dasent was sent in—she was a teacher at the college, quite a young girl. She had to have a very bad operation for appendicitis, and as we were short of nurses at the time, they were both put in my charge. Her room was directly facing his on the opposite side of the passage, and I slept in the small room beyond. Miss Dasent was very ill at first, and for a couple of nights she used to moan terribly. Mr. Longhurst could not avoid hearing, and he was quite unhappy about her.

Well, you know the rules at Welsford are very strict, and we are forbidden to speak of one patient to another—two or three nurses were dismissed while I was there for talking—so I made it a rule not to answer any questions, and when Mr. Longhurst asked me about my patient across the passage, I used to put him off, but he overheard her name somehow, and I can't tell you how many times a day he used to inquire for her. The poor girl was quite delirious at first; oddly enough, she never ceased raving about a dark man.

"Nurse," she would say over and over again, "who is the dark man that's watching me? I never saw him before, did I? He's very sorry for me all the same, I know, though he never says a word."

"There's no man there at all, dearie," I would say; "lie still, now, and Nurse will stay beside you."

But in a minute she would start up again: "What kind eyes he has, Nurse! No one ever looked at me like that before." Then, when I thought she was just dropping off to sleep, she would open her eyes suddenly. "He has a black beard, Nurse. I never

liked a man with a black beard before. Why is he all in white, too, I don't understand?"

I forgot to tell you that Miss Dasent has masses of lovely red-gold hair, otherwise you wouldn't call her pretty, but her hair is just beautiful. Five or six days after the operation, when she was beginning to get on a bit, Mr. Longhurst had a splendid box of flowers sent him from his own gardens. It was the beginning of June, and the roses were at their very best.

"Nurse," says he suddenly, as I was putting them in water, "I want you to take some over to the girl with the lovely golden hair."

This speech caused me so much surprise that I dropped the flowers from my hands. How on earth did he know anything about Miss Dasent or her hair? Had the housemaid been talking?

"I never take messages from one patient to another, Mr. Longhurst," said I, as stiffly as I could. "I think you know we are not even allowed to mention one patient to another."

"I know that very well, Nurse," he said good-humouredly, "and I am not asking you to mention me at all. You can simply put some flowers in Miss Dasent's room without telling her where they come from—or anyone else, for that matter."

I thought of the lonely girl in the opposite room with her big, wistful eyes and pathetic mouth. No one ever came to see her, no one had even inquired for her after the first day or two, no one ever sent her a flower. My heart relented.

"Very well, I will put a bunch or two in her room," I said. "There is no harm in that, I am sure."

Mr. Longhurst seemed quite pleased, and picked out all the finest blossoms himself to send her. Miss Dasent was quite sensible now, but once she startled me by saying:

"Who is the dark man in white, Nurse?"

"It is the doctor, Miss Dasent," said I, for I thought she remembered seeing the doctors all in white coats the day of her operation.

She said nothing, but shook her head incredulously.

She was delighted with Mr. Longhurst's roses, and every day after that he used to make me take a bunch across to her. It was strange, I thought, that she never once asked me where they came from.

"Give me one in my hand, Nurse," she would say, and she used to lie with the rose

against her cheek and a contented smile on her little white face.

"Has Miss Dasent any books or papers to read?" Mr. Longhurst asked one day. "No one ever comes to see her, I notice."

"You notice a great deal too much," said I severely, "you shouldn't be asking such questions. You will get people into trouble."

"Well, I won't ask any more questions, Nurse," he said, "on one condition; and that is, if you will take her this book and those papers. That won't get you into a row, I am sure."

I could not withstand him, and Miss Dasent was quite well enough to read by this time, but no one ever sent her a book or paper. So every day after that I took her a paper, or a novel, or magazine from Mr. Longhurst. She never asked me who sent them, and I meant her to think they were my own.

It was very hot weather, and when I went to my meals in the dining-hall below, I used to leave both the patients' doors open, so that I could hear at once if they rang their bells. One morning it turned suddenly colder, and I said to Mr. Longhurst:

"I will shut your door to-day. You won't be wanting anything now until I come up again."

"No, thank you, Nurse," he said very decidedly, "I prefer it open."

"You are sure you won't feel a draught? There's a cold wind," said I doubtfully.

"Quite sure!" he answered, so emphatically that off I went without another word. Curiously enough, my other patient was altogether of the same opinion.

"Please leave my door open, Nurse," she implored, "I like it ever so much better."

"What a wonder to have patients who like fresh air!" I said to myself, as I went downstairs.

Two days later Mr. Longhurst went home. He seemed very reluctant to leave, and at last the doctor had to tell him that we wanted the room for another case.

After that I noticed that every day a beautiful box of roses came for Miss Dasent, not to speak of papers, books, and magazines. She never told me where they came from, and I never asked her, but I recognised Mr. Longhurst's writing on the labels. How did they know each other? I was completely puzzled.

"The doctor says you may go out on Saturday," said I one evening to Miss Dasent. She was lying on a couch by the

open window. Her golden hair gleamed in the rays of the setting sun; her blue eyes shone with a happy light; very different did she look now from what she had been a month before.

She did not reply, so I went on:

"Have you made any arrangements yet? You know you will not be fit for school-teaching for some time."

A deep blush burnt on her cheek.

"Yes, thank you, Nurse," she said. "I am going to Eastbourne for a month."

"Alone?" I questioned, wondering.

"No," hesitatingly, "with a friend. At least I never saw the lady before, but she has kindly invited me to stay with her!"

I was very thankful to hear that the forlorn little thing had got someone to care for her, and a few days later I went to see her off in London. She seemed very much excited and strangely happy.

When we reached the station whom should I see on the platform but Mr. Longhurst? He came straight up, and what a look passed between them!

(Nurse Byford gave a sigh. She was thinking of a time long gone by.)

"I will take care of her now, Nurse," he said, as he wrung my hand. "She is going to stay for a month with my cousin, Mrs. Maxwell, at Eastbourne. After that I hope——" He looked at her with a world of meaning in his eyes. Her pale cheeks flushed crimson and her eyelids drooped shyly.

"You must come and spend a day with us there, Nurse," he said, without finishing the sentence. "We have a great deal to tell you. We owe you more than you know."

They went off together, and I went back to Welsford, wondering what he could mean.

A fortnight later they met me at Eastbourne. "Congratulate us, Nurse," were almost his first words, "we are going to be married."

"I am very glad," I stammered, "but I don't understand."

"Of course you don't," he laughed gleefully. "We had better make a clean breast of it now. Why, Nurse, it was all your doing! When you used to leave our doors ajar you did not know, perhaps, that we could see each other in the looking-glasses!

That is how I first saw my little golden-haired girl."

"And I saw the man with the black beard, don't you remember, Nurse?" Miss Dasent blushed very prettily.

"Good gracious me!" I nearly fainted with surprise. "I had no idea. How extraordinary! You should have told me," reproachfully.

Mr. Longhurst's laugh was like that of a mischievous schoolboy, who has successfully outwitted a master.

"Not we! I was awfully afraid you would find out, or that Mary would object when she came to."

Miss Dasent hung her head guiltily. "I had got so used to it," she said, "and it was only when you were at your meals, Nurse," apologetically.

"You were good about taking her the books and papers, Nurse," said her lover to me. "I was in mortal fear that you would refuse. You must forgive me, but after a bit I used to write her little notes. She was so lonely, poor wee girlie," as I gave an exclamation of horror. "It was her only comfort, but she never wrote to me until I left the home."

"I can hardly believe my ears!" To tell the truth, I felt quite stunned by all their revelations. "What would the matron say? She would never forgive me."

"She will never know," said Mr. Longhurst reassuringly, "and, by the way, we want you to accept a post at the Griffin Street Home in London." He pulled a letter from his pocket as he spoke. "It is very good pay, and all that; a friend of mine—ours," he corrected himself with a smile—"is interested in it."

Nurse Byford stopped:

"So here I am, Miss Mussen," she said with a smile; "but I moved the looking-glasses before I left Welsford, and you may be sure I take good care to see where the mirror is placed now, before I leave a door open."

"So they are married?" The old maid heaved a sigh of envy.

"Married and perfectly happy," Nurse Byford laughed, "and all my doing—just think of it!"



EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS NEW FEATURE.

Thrilling Escapes.

Who has not experienced a thrill when reading well-told accounts of escapes from wild beasts, from burning houses, from floods, from prisons, from savages, from sinking ships, and other unpleasant situations too numerous to mention? In this feature the works of the greatest writers of the past are made to yield their toll of such exciting happenings. Each extract forms a miniature story, and is perfectly intelligible without reference to the book from which it is taken.

GILLIATT'S ESCAPE FROM THE DEVIL-FISH.

From "*The Toilers of the Sea*," by VICTOR HUGO.

(Published by Geo. Routledge & Sons, Ltd.)

"*Les Travailleurs de la Mer*" ("*Toilers of the Sea*"), from which the following extract is taken, is well described as an "idyll of passion, adventure and self-sacrifice." It was written by Victor Hugo during his exile from France in the Channel Islands, and the story relates the adventures of Gilliatt, a Guernsey fisherman. The wonderful descriptions of Guernsey, its coast, the home lives of its inhabitants, its ancient customs, traditions, and superstitions, sketched in vivid colours by Hugo's masterly pen, are intensely interesting and often dramatic, especially the incident quoted, which describes the hero's fight for life while in the clutches of a monster devil-fish.

Gilliatt, in search of shellfish for food, while chasing a crab along the base of the rock, discovers a cave, which he proceeds to explore. He finds himself in a dark and gloomy chamber, and perceiving (as his eyes grow used to the darkness) a crevice in which he believes the crab has taken shelter, he plunges his hand in and begins to grope about in the darkness.

SUDDENLY he felt his arm grasped, and a feeling of indescribable horror crept over him.

Some living thing—thin, rough, flat, icy, slimy—from the dark depth of the cavity had twined itself round his arm, and was crawling up towards his breast. Its pressure was like that of a strap being drawn tight, and its steady persistence like that of a drill. In less than a second, a something, he knew not what, but felt that it was of a spiral form, had closed round his wrist and elbow, and reached his shoulder, and a pang went through his body below his armpit.

He drew back hastily, but all power of motion had almost left him. He was nailed to the spot. With his left hand, which still remained free, he grasped the knife which was between his teeth, and setting his back to the rock, made a desperate effort to withdraw his arm. He only succeeded in loosening the deadly clasp for a moment, which immediately tightened again.

It was pliant as leather, strong as steel, and cold as night. A second object, long and pointed, emerged from the cavity, like a tongue issuing from a pair of monstrous jaws. It appeared for a moment to lick Gilliatt's naked chest, then, stretching itself out until it became longer and thinner, it crept over his flesh and wound itself round him.

At the same time a terrible and indescribable sense of pain compelled every nerve and muscle of his body to quiver. He felt hundreds of blunt points penetrating his flesh—it seemed as if innumerable minute mouths had fastened upon his body, and were seeking to drain away his life-blood.

A third undulating, whiplike shape issued from the rock and lashed his body with a quivering movement; suddenly, it fixed itself upon him, as firmly as the others had done.

Agony, when wrought up to a certain pitch, is dumb, and Gilliatt uttered no cry. There

was sufficient light for him to see the repulsive shapes that had wound around him: A fourth ligature—but this time with the swiftness of an arrow—darted towards his stomach, and clasped it in its foul embrace.

It was impossible to sever or to tear away the slimy bands which enlaced his body so tightly, adhering to it by a number of suckers. Each of these was the focus of strange and agonising pains. He felt that numberless minute mouths were devouring him at once.

A fifth long, slimy object glided from the cavity. It passed by the others, and wound itself round Gilliatt's chest so tightly that he could hardly draw his breath. These whiplike ribbons were pointed at the end, but grew broader, like the blade of a sword towards the hilt, and all five evidently sprang from a common centre. They crept and glided all over him. He felt those strange pressures, which seemed to proceed from the suction of miniature mouths, shift their position from time to time. Suddenly a huge, slimy mass, round and flattened, issued from below the cavity. It was the centre to which these five limbs were attached, like the spokes of a wheel. On the opposite side of this loathsome monster could be seen the commencement of three other tentacles, the ends of which were concealed beneath the rock.

In the centre of this slimy mass were two eyes.

These eyes were fixed on Gilliatt.

He knew that he was in the clutches of a devil-fish. . . .

What is the devil-fish? It is the vampire of the ocean. . . .

A dull, grey-coloured form undulates partly in the water, it is as thick as a man's arm, and about a foot and a half in length. It looks like a bundle of rags, and resembles in shape a closed umbrella without a handle. This mis-shapen mass advances towards you slowly; suddenly it opens; eight long tentacles extend from around a face with two dull, glassy eyes. Their slow undulations are like lambent flames. They resemble the spokes of a wheel, and are four or five feet in diameter. It darts upon its prey and harpoons its victim.

It winds round its victim, covering him and enveloping him in its slimy folds. . . .

Once fixed you cannot tear it away. It clings closely to its prey. . . .

This monster is termed by sailors a "poulp," the scientific name of which is

cephaloptera, whilst in legendary lore they are known as *krakens*. English mariners call them devil-fish and blood-suckers. In the Channel Islands they are spoken of as *pieuvre*. . . .

Gilliatt was up to his waist in the water, his feet planted on the slippery pebbles at the bottom, his right arm paralysed by the flat coils of the tentacles of the *pieuvre*, and his chest almost hidden beneath the interlaced crossings of the terrible bandage.

Out of the eight arms of the devil-fish, three were clasped round Gilliatt in this fashion; clinging to the granite on one side, and to the man on the other, the monster bound its victim to the rock. Two hundred and fifty suckers were at work upon Gilliatt at once.

Terrible complication of agony and loathing, to be grasped by an enormous hand, the elastic fingers of which, measuring more than a yard in length, were, on the inside, covered with living blisters, eating into the very flesh!

As we have said before, it is impossible to tear away the folds of the devil-fish. The more you endeavour to do so the tighter it holds. It only makes it cling the closer. Its resistance increases with your efforts. The more the victim struggles, the tighter grow the folds.

Gilliatt's last hope was in his knife. He had only his left hand free, but, as we know, he could use that well. It might have been said of him that he had two right hands.

His open knife was in his hand.

But the tentacles of the *pieuvre* cannot be severed—it is a leathery substance, impossible to cut with a knife; it slips away from the blade; besides, from its mode of attack, cutting these coils would lacerate the victim's flesh.

The poulp is a dangerous adversary, but there is a way of resisting it. The fishermen of Sark know this, as does everyone who has seen them make certain abrupt movements in the sea. The porpoises, too, know it, and have a way of snapping at the cuttlefish which decapitates it at once. Hence the frequent sight of cuttlefish, poulps and calmar, floating on the sea without heads. In fact, the only vulnerable part of the poulp is the head. Gilliatt knew this well.

He had never seen a *pieuvre* of so large a size before. At his first encounter he found himself face to face with one of the most enormous dimensions. Many a man would have been rendered powerless from terror: A combat with a *pieuvre* resembles, in a

way, a fight with a bull; there is a certain moment of which it is necessary to take advantage. With the bull it is when he lowers his head; with the devil-fish when it thrusts forward its head. It is a momentary movement, and he who fails to take advantage of it is lost. All that we have related had not taken many minutes, but Gilliatt felt the two hundred and fifty suckers working with increased power.

The fearful creature is full of cunning; it endeavours to stupefy its prey, and therefore seizes it and waits.

Gilliatt grasped his knife firmly, the suction became stronger and more painful.

He looked at the *pieuvre*, which looked at him in return.

All of a sudden the monster detached its sixth tentacle from the rock, and, darting it at Gilliatt, endeavoured to seize his left arm. At the same moment it thrust its head sharply forward. One second more, and that hideous mouth would have been fastened on his chest. Bleeding from his sides, and with both his arms bound, he would have been a dead man.

But Gilliatt was waiting for his opportunity. Gilliatt was on his guard. He avoided the threatening movement, and, at

the instant that the creature made a bite at his chest, he struck a decisive blow with his knife.

There were two convulsions in reverse directions—that of Gilliatt, and that of the *pieuvre*. It was like the meeting of two flashes of lightning. Gilliatt had plunged the point of his knife into the flat, slimy, substance, and with a rapid, circular movement, like the flourish of a whip, he tore off the head as a man draws a tooth. It was all over in an instant.

The creature dropped at once; the terrible folds relaxed; it fell like a mass of wet linen; the suckers ceased their work of destruction, and relaxed their hold on rock and man. The body sank into the water.

Panting with his efforts, Gilliatt could see, on the pebbles at his feet, two shapeless masses of slimy matter, the head on one side, and the remainder on the other—we say remainder, for we cannot dignify it by the name of a body.

Gilliatt, fearing that it might seize him again in a last convulsive moment of agony, hastily withdrew beyond the reach of its tentacles.

But the *pieuvre* was really dead, and he closed his knife.

JACK SHEPPARD'S ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE.

From "Jack Sheppard," by W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.

(Published by John Dicks.)

Jack Sheppard, the highwayman hero of Ainsworth's famous romance, was born at Stepney in 1702, and apprenticed to a carpenter in Wych Street, Drury Lane. He fell into bad company and became a "Knight of the Road," committing many daring robberies. In 1742 he was four times captured, but each time escaped—on one occasion forcing six heavy doors in Newgate prison. The next time he was taken his luck deserted him, and he was hanged at Tyburn in sight of 200,000 spectators.

AT three o'clock Austin (the gaoler) brought up Jack's provisions, and, after carefully examining his fetters and finding all secure, told him if he wanted anything further he must mention it, as he should not be able to return in the evening, his presence being required elsewhere. . . .

With the usual precautions Austin then departed.

"And now," cried Jack, leaping up, "for an achievement compared with which all I have yet done shall be as nothing!"

Jack Sheppard's first object was to free himself from his handcuffs. This he accomplished by holding the chain that connected them firmly between his teeth, and, squeezing his fingers as closely together as possible, succeeded in drawing his wrists through the manacles.

He next twisted the heavy gyves round and round, and partly by main strength, partly by a dexterous and well-applied jerk, snapped asunder the central link by which they were attached to the padlock.

Taking off his stockings, he then drew up the basils as far as he was able, and tied the fragments of the broken chain to his legs, to prevent them from clanking and impeding his future exertions.

Jack's former attempt to pass up the chimney was obstructed by an iron bar. To remove this obstacle it was necessary to make an extensive breach in the wall.

With the broken links of the chain, which served him in lieu of more efficient implements, he commenced operations just above the chimney-piece, and soon contrived to pick a hole in the plaster.

He found the wall, as he suspected, solidly constructed of brick and stone, and with the slight and inadequate tools which he possessed, it was a work of infinite labour and skill to get out a single brick.

That done, however, he was well aware the rest would be comparatively easy; and as he threw the brick to the ground, he exclaimed triumphantly: "The first step is taken, the main difficulty is overcome!"

Animated by this trifling success, he proceeded with fresh ardour, and the rapidity of his progress was proclaimed by the heap of bricks, stones, and mortar which before long covered the floor.

At the expiration of an hour, by dint of unrelenting exertion, he had made so large a breach in the chimney that he could stand upright in it. He was now within a foot of the bar, and introducing himself into the hole, speedily worked his way to it.

Regardless of the risk he incurred from some heavy stone dropping on his head or feet—regardless also of the noise made by the falling rubbish, and of the imminent danger which he consequently ran of being interrupted by some of the gaolers should the sound reach their ears—he continued to pull down large masses of the wall, which he flung upon the floor of the cell.

Having worked thus for another quarter of an hour without being sensible of fatigue, though he was half stifled by the clouds of dust which his exertions raised, he had made a hole about three feet wide and six high, and uncovered the iron bar. Grasping it firmly with both hands, he quickly wrenched it from the stones in which it was mortised, and leapt to the ground. On examination it proved to be a flat bar of iron, nearly a yard in length, and more than an inch square.

"A capital instrument for my purpose," thought Jack, shouldering it, "and worth all the trouble I have had in procuring it."

Having once more got into the chimney, he climbed to a level with the ward above, and recommenced operations as vigorously as before. He was now aided with a powerful implement, with which he soon contrived to make a hole in the wall.

"Every brick I take out," cried Jack, as fresh rubbish clattered down the chimney, "brings me nearer my mother."

The ward into which Jack was endeavouring to break was called the Red Room, from the circumstance of its walls having once been painted in that colour. : : :

Having made a hole in the wall sufficiently large to pass through, Jack first tossed the bar into the room, and then crept after it: As soon as he had gained his feet he glanced round the bare, blank walls of the cell, and oppressed by the musty, close atmosphere, exclaimed:

"I'll let a little fresh air into this dungeon: They say it hasn't been opened for eight years, but I won't be eight years in getting out of it!"

In stepping across the room some sharp point in the floor pierced his foot, and, stooping to examine it, he found that the wound had been inflicted by a long, rusty nail, which projected from the boards. Totally disregarding the pain, he picked up the nail and reserved it for future use. Nor was he long in making it available.

On examining the door he found it secured by a large, rusty lock, which he endeavoured to pick with the nail he had just acquired; but all his efforts proving ineffectual, he removed the plate that covered it with the bar, and with his fingers contrived to draw back the bolt.

Opening the door he then stepped into a dark, narrow passage, leading, as he was well aware, to the chapel. : : :

Hurrying on, his progress was soon checked by a strong door several inches in thickness, and nearly as wide as the passage. Running his hand carefully over it in search of the lock, he perceived to his dismay that it was fastened on the other side.

After several vain attempts to burst it open, he resolved, as a last alternative, to break through the wall in the part nearest to the lock. This was a much more serious task than he anticipated.

The wall was of considerable thickness, and built altogether of stone, and the noise he was compelled to make in using the heavy bar, which brought sparks with every splinter he struck off, was so great that he feared it must be heard by the prisoners on the debtors' side. Heedless, however, of the consequences, he pursued his task.

Half-an-hour's labour, during which he was obliged more than once to pause to regain breath, sufficed to make a hole wide enough to allow a passage for his arm up to the elbow. In this way he was able to force back a ponderous bolt from its socket, and, to his unspeakable joy, found that the door instantly yielded. Once more cheered by daylight, he hastened forward, and entered the chapel. : : : Jack had got into one of the prisoners'

pens at the north side of the chapel. The inclosure by which it was surrounded was about twelve feet high; the underpart being composed of oaken planks, the upper of strong iron grating, surmounted by sharp iron spikes. In the middle there was a gate. It was locked. But Jack speedily burst it open with the iron bar.

On one side of the chapel there was a large, grated window, but as it looked upon the interior of the gaol, Jack preferred following the course he had originally decided upon to making any attempt in this quarter.

Accordingly he proceeded to a gate which stood upon the south, and guarded the passage communicating with the leads. It was grated, and crested with spikes, like that he had just burst open, and thinking it a needless waste of time to force it, he broke off one of the spikes, which he carried with him for further purposes, and then climbed over it.

A short flight of steps brought him to a dark passage, into which he plunged. Here he found another strong door, making the fifth he had encountered. Well aware that the doors in this passage were much stronger than those in the entry he had just quitted, he was neither surprised nor dismayed to find it fastened by a lock of unusual size. After repeatedly trying to remove the plate, which was so firmly screwed down that it resisted all his efforts, and vainly attempting to pick it with the spike and nail, he at length, after half-an-hour's ineffectual labour, wrenched off the box by means of the iron bar, and the door, as he laughingly expressed it, "became his humble servant."

But this difficulty was only overcome to be succeeded by one still greater. Hastening along the passage he came to the sixth door. For this he was prepared, but he was not prepared for the almost insurmountable obstacles which it presented.

Running his hand hastily over it, he was startled to find it one complicated mass of bolts and bars. It seemed as if all the precautions previously taken were here accumulated. Anyone less courageous than himself would have abandoned the attempt from a conviction of its utter hopelessness, but though it might damp his ardour, it could not deter him.

Once again he passed his hand over the surface, and carefully noted all the obstacles. There was a lock, apparently more than a foot wide, strongly plated, and girded to the door with thick iron hoops. Below it a prodigiously large bolt was shot into the

socket, and, in order to keep it there, was fastened by a hasp, and further protected by an immense padlock. Besides this, the door was crossed and recrossed by iron bars clenched by broad-headed nails. An iron fillet secured the socket of the bolt and the box of the lock to the main post of the doorway.

Nothing disheartened by this survey, Jack set to work upon the lock, which he attacked with all his implements; now attempting to pick it with the nail, now to wrench it off with the bar, but all without effect.

He not only failed in making any impression, but seemed to increase the difficulties, for, after an hour's toil, he had broken the nail and slightly bent the iron bar.

Completely overcome by fatigue, with strained muscles and bruised hand, streaming with perspiration, and with lips so parched that he would gladly have parted with a treasure if he had possessed it for a draught of water, he sank against the wall.

By degrees his spirits revived, and encouraging himself with the idea that the present impediment, though the greatest, was the last, he set himself seriously to consider how it might best be overcome.

On reflection it occurred to him that he might perhaps be able to loosen the iron fillet; a notion no sooner conceived than executed.

With incredible labour, and by the aid of both spike and nail, he succeeded in getting the point of the bar beneath the fillet. Exerting all his energies, and using the bar as a lever, he forced off the iron band, which was full seven feet high, seven inches wide, and two thick, and which brought with it in its fall the box of the lock, and the socket of the bolt, leaving no further hindrance.

Overjoyed beyond measure at having vanquished this apparently insurmountable obstacle, Jack darted through the door.

Ascending a short flight of steps, Jack found at the summit a door, which, being bolted in the inside, he speedily opened.

The fresh air which blew in his face greatly revived him: He had now reached what was called the Lower Leads—a flat covering a part of the prison contiguous to the gateway, and surrounded on all sides by walls about fourteen feet high. On the north stood the battlements of one of the towers of the gate. On this side a flight of wooden steps, protected by a handrail,

led to a door opening upon the summit of the prison. This door was crested with spikes, and guarded on the right by a bristling semicircle of spikes.

Hastily ascending these steps Jack found the door, as he anticipated, locked. He could have easily forced it, but preferred a more expeditious mode of reaching the roof, which suggested itself to him. Mounting the door he had last opened, he placed his hands on the wall above and quickly drew himself up.

Just as he got on the roof of the prison St. Sepulchre's clock struck eight. It was instantly answered by the deep note of St. Paul's, and the concert was prolonged by other neighbouring churches. Jack had thus been six hours in accomplishing his arduous task. . . :

Proceeding along the wall Jack reached the southern tower, over the battlements of which he clambered, and crossing it, dropped upon the roof of the gate. He then scaled the northern tower, and made his way to the summit of that part of the prison which fronted Giltspur Street. Arrived at the extremity of the building, he found that it overlooked the flat roof of a house which, as far as he could judge in the darkness, lay at a depth of about twenty feet below.

Not choosing to hazard so great a fall, Jack turned to examine the building to see whether any more favourable point of descent presented itself, but could discover nothing but steep walls, without a single available projection. As he looked around, he beheld an incessant stream of passengers hurrying on below. Lights glimmered in the windows of the different houses, and a lamplighter was running from post to post on his way to Snow Hill.

Finding it impossible to descend on any side without incurring serious risk, Jack resolved to return for his blanket, by the help of which he felt certain of accomplishing a safe landing on the roof of the house in Giltspur Street.

Accordingly he began to retrace his steps, and pursuing the course he had recently taken, scaling the two towers, and passing along the wall of the prison, he descended by means of the door upon the Lower Leads. Before he re-entered the prison, he hesitated from a doubt whether he was not fearfully increasing his risk of capture ; but convinced that he had no other alternative, he went on.

During all this time he had never quitted

the iron bar, and he now grasped it with the firm determination of selling his life dearly if met with any opposition.

A few seconds sufficed to clear the passage, through which it had previously cost him more than two hours to force his way. . . :

He was now at the entrance of the chapel, and striking the door over which he had previously climbed a violent blow with the bar, it flew open. To vault over the pews was the work of a moment, and having gained the entry leading to the Red Room he passed through the first door, his progress being only impeded by the pile of broken stones which he himself had raised.

Listening at one of the doors leading to the Master Debtors' side, he heard a loud voice chanting a Bacchanalian melody, and the boisterous laughter that accompanied the song convinced him that no suspicion was entertained in this quarter: Entering the Red Room he crept through the hole in the wall, descended the chimney, and arrived once more in his old place of captivity.

How different were his present feelings compared with those he had experienced on quitting it. Then, though full of confidence, he half doubted his power of accomplishing his designs. Now he had achieved them, and felt assured of success. The vast heap of rubbish on the floor had been so materially increased by the bricks and plaster thrown down in his attack upon the wall of the Red Room, that it was with some difficulty he could find the blanket, which was almost buried beneath the pile. He next searched for his stockings and shoes, and when found, put them on. . . :

Throwing the blanket over his left arm, and shouldering the iron bar, he again clambered up the chimney, regained the Red Room, hurried along the first passage, crossed the chapel, threaded the entry to the Lower Leads, and in less than ten minutes after quitting the Castle had reached the northern extremity of the prison.

Previously to his descent he had left the nail and spike on the wall, and with these he fastened the blanket to the stone coping: This done, he let himself carefully down by it, and having only a few feet to drop, alighted in safety.

Having now fairly got out of Newgate for the second time, with a heart throbbing with exultation, he hastened to make good his escape.

In the Toils. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By L. G. MOBERLY.

This story relates the terrifying experiences of a young heiress in her efforts to free herself from the clutches of an unscrupulous couple.

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT.

"HELP—help—help!" the cry rang out upon the stillness of the night, and echoed over the moor in a weird, blood-curdling sound. For more than an hour the solitary pedestrian who had been tramping along the road that traversed this bleak upland had been almost acutely conscious of the surrounding silence, unbroken save for the dull murmur of the waves upon an unseen beach far below.

He stopped short in his rapid walk as that agonised cry broke upon his ears, and the silence that followed it was so profound that for a moment Brian Hayes tried to assure himself that he had been mistaken, and that the supposed sound was only in his imagination. But even whilst he was trying to convince himself of his own folly, and was preparing to start forward once more, the cry again rang out upon the quiet night:

"Help—help—help!"

There was such an agony of terror in the voice, such a ring of acute fear that the young man's blood ran cold, whilst he peered through the gloom and bent his head to try to locate the place whence the sound had come.

"Help—help—help!" For the third time the passionate, pleading call sounded over the moorland, but this time, although the words were more faint, Hayes could perfectly well discover the direction from which the voice was calling, and he was able, too, to recognise that it was a woman's.

Flinging down his knapsack, but holding fast to the stout stick he carried, he turned to the left off from the road and on to the rough moor, making his way as far as the tussocks of heather and lumps of gorse would allow him towards the place from which he calculated the cries had proceeded.

Twilight had now passed down into a

black, all-enveloping darkness which made progress both slow and difficult, and Hayes moved with redoubled wariness, when the sullen roar of the waves made it dawn upon him that he must be advancing very close to the edge of the cliff.

The dull murmur that had been in his ears all the evening suddenly increased in volume, and the young man drew back with a horrified exclamation when, on putting out his stick to feel his way, he found it touched nothing—that vacancy yawned in front of him.

"Help—for Heaven's sake, help!"

The agonised appeal reached him for the fourth time.

The voice was undoubtedly human and a woman's, and the sound seemed to come out of the darkness somewhere just beyond and below him:

If this were so then somebody must have fallen over the cliff. Hayes moved forward cautiously again, calling out loudly:

"Where are you? I am coming—tell me where you are."

"Save me—oh! save me!" came the piteous response. "I am half way down the cliff, and I cannot hold on much longer. Help!"

Stooping down and crawling for greater safety on his hands and knees, Hayes advanced with the utmost care until by the help of his trusty stick he once more found himself on the edge of the cliff, then he craned his neck forward and tried to look downward into the abyss.

"Hold on a moment longer," he called out to the unseen person below him; "I will do my best for you—only hold on."

"Help—me quickly," the voice responded faintly, so faintly that Hayes wondered despairingly whether the woman were on the point of swooning and falling headlong to destruction.

Whilst his brain was struggling in vain to devise any means by which he could reach and rescue the woman, his senses were acutely conscious of every sound, and he became aware of carriage wheels driving swiftly along the road behind him:

He sprang to his feet, and as fast as the darkness would allow him, stumbled back over the rough ground towards the road, upon which, to his unbounded relief, he caught sight of two carriage lamps advancing in his direction:

"Stop—stop!" he shouted at the full pitch of his voice. "Stop!" he cried almost frantically, as it seemed to him that the speed of the moving carriage was in no way diminished, and he expected every moment to see it vanish beyond his reach before he could obtain the succour he sought.

But his loud call reached the ears of the coachman, and the carriage was pulled up with a jerk just as Hayes reached the roadway. He could now see that the conveyance was a closed landau driven by a coachman in livery, who leant down from his box to peer at the man who had stopped him, whilst at the same moment the carriage window was lowered and a man's voice exclaimed querulously:

"Why are you stopping, Jones? What is this?" The last words came abruptly, as the speaker's eyes fell upon Hayes, who hurried up to the open window.

"There is someone over the cliff," the young man gasped out breathlessly; "for Heaven's sake help me. I have no means of reaching her, and she cannot hold on much longer; if your coachman——" His incoherent speech was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the violent opening of the carriage door, and the gentleman whose face had appeared at the window now sprang into the road beside Hayes, exclaiming in a tone of extreme agitation:

"A woman over the cliff? Where—where? Show me quickly. My dear"—he turned back towards the carriage and spoke to someone whose figure Hayes could see silhouetted against the opposite window—"if it should be she—Good Heavens! if it should be she!"

A sharp exclamation from the interior of the vehicle replied to those words, and a woman scrambled quickly out into the road, a woman whose face, seen by the flickering light of the carriage lamp, struck Brian even in that moment of confusion as one of the most remarkable he had ever seen.

"If it should be she," the woman repeated

mechanically, and it seemed to Brian that an odd, vindictive gleam shot into her eyes:

"Bring a carriage lamp, Jones," the gentleman said quickly, "and, Myra, you had better stay here whilst we go and see what can be done—we——"

"Nothing can be done without a rope or something long enough to throw over the cliff," Brian interrupted; "it is quite evident that the person, whoever she is, is some way down its face."

The coachman, whose plain, shrewd face inspired Hayes with more confidence than did either of the other two countenances, here remarked drily that he had a bit of rope on the box which he always kept by him in case of emergencies, and he was soon on the ground, the lamp swinging from his hand. Hayes grasped his arm and hurried off with him towards the edge of the cliff.

The two men moved more cautiously as the booming surges told them they were nearing their goal, and Jones, the coachman, lifted his lamp above his head to see more clearly what lay before them. A shudder ran through Hayes when the fitful light revealed the awful chasm that lay almost immediately below:

"Are you there?" he shouted, putting his hands to his mouth to make a trumpet of them; "we have a rope; call out to show us exactly where you are."

Faintly, very faintly, came a low cry from under their feet:

"I—am—here—I—cannot—hold. Come."

Hayes flung himself flat down at the cliff's edge, and gazed through the blackness till he could discern a white form clinging to something on the face of the abyss.

"We will throw the rope," he called out, "catch it—and we will pull you up."

Setting the lamp as near as they dared to the edge, the two men grasped the rope and let it out over the edge of the cliff, whilst Hayes shouted directions to the prostrate figure below.

In agonised suspense Hayes held his breath until he felt a faint jerk upon the rope, and knew that the woman's hands had grasped it; then once more he called down to her how to hold it and how to prevent herself from being dashed against the face of the cliff, and then the two men slowly and silently pulled the rope and its burden towards the summit.

The woman had nearly reached the top when a loud cry close beside him so startled Hayes that, but for an ingrained habit of

self-control, he would certainly have lost his balance. He felt the rope quiver as though the cry had also startled her whom they were trying to save, and an ungovernable fury against the person who had uttered that cry seized upon him even whilst he lifted the now fainting woman on to the grass.

"Is she safe? Is she quite safe?" a voice said in his ear, and he turned to see the gentleman who had been in the carriage looking at him with white face and wide eyes.

"Was it you who nearly sent her back over the cliff with your miserable cry?" Hayes exclaimed angrily; "it was a precious near thing. What made you shriek out like that when you might have seen she was almost at the top?"

"Forgive me," the other answered, in a low voice that shook pathetically; "it was the shock, the awful shock of seeing my poor Gwen in such danger—I could not bear it."

"The sooner you learn to have some self-control the better," Hayes answered shortly, turning his back on the other man, to kneel beside the prostrate woman and lift her head from the tussock of heather against which it rested. He now saw that she was scarcely more than a girl in years, and though her face was white as the driven snow, and her eyes were fast closed, nothing could detract from the extreme sweetness and loveliness of her features.

She was in evening dress, her white neck and arms were scratched and torn by contact with brambles and rocks against which she had fallen.

With a moan the girl opened her eyes, and a shiver ran through her slight frame.

"Come—quickly," she gasped out, "help—"

It was plain she still fancied she was lying half way down the cliff and in imminent danger of her life, and the great, blue eyes she fixed on Hayes' face were strained and wild.

"Help!" she murmured again, and put out one of her hands with a piteous, appealing gesture.

"You are quite safe," the young man said quietly, taking the small hand in his, and trying to reassure her by pressing it firmly; "you are on the top of the cliff now, and quite safe—with friends."

"Friends"—her blue eyes looked up at him with a hopeless glance—"I—have—no friends—I shall only be safe—if—I—go—"

Her sentence broke off with a little cry as a voice said gently in caressing tones:

"My dearest Gwen, you will soon be safe at home," and Hayes saw that the gentleman of the carriage was now standing on the other side of the girl, and smiling down upon her kindly.

To the young man's unmitigated astonishment the girl did not finish her broken sentence, but a laugh broke from her instead, a laugh so strange, so despairing, that Hayes could hardly believe his ears.

"Home—yes—home," she murmured, and at that she relapsed into unconsciousness.

* * *

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

"YOU will allow us to offer you hospitality for the night, as well as our warmest thanks for your rescue of my dear niece," the gentleman said, after Hayes had tenderly carried the still unconscious girl to the carriage and deposited her there beside the tall, handsome lady who was awaiting them.

"It is very kind of you," the young man replied with hesitation, torn by the conflicting feelings of interest and pity towards the girl he had rescued, and an instinctive repugnance to laying himself under an obligation to total strangers, and strangers he was not very sure he liked.

"Indeed you must come back with us," the lady here chimed in, leaning out of the carriage to say the words. "Poltreu, the nearest village, is at least three miles beyond our house, and there is no other dwelling of any sort or kind for miles. Oh, you must come to us." The tones were kindly, as also was the expression of the dark, handsome face, and Hayes, tired out after a long day's walking, accepted the invitation and took his seat in the carriage, beside his host and opposite to the girl he had saved.

"We must introduce ourselves formally," the former said with a pleasant laugh, as they bowled quickly along in the opposite direction to that in which they had been driving when Hayes first met them. "Our name is Strathay, and that poor, dear girl is my niece, Miss Gwen Marchmont, who lives with my wife and myself. Poor, dear child," and he shook his head sadly and significantly.

"Can you account for her accident of this evening?" Hayes asked, looking keenly into the benevolent countenance of Mr. Strathay, who replied by another sad shake of the head.

"We can only guess at it; we cannot

account for it," he said. "My wife and I have had a great deal of anxiety about poor Gwen. She is an orphan and in my charge, and a very trying charge it has been." Here he sighed deeply, and an answering sigh came from the corner in which his wife sat.

"She has always been delicate, poor child," he continued, speaking with great tenderness, "and from her earliest years has shown a tendency to—brain trouble. We have had the best advice for her, but the doctors agree that her mind is very far from strong, and that the slightest shock or trouble might permanently upset its balance."

"Then the shock to-night——"

"I dare not even think what the shock of to-night may mean for her! You can imagine our anxiety, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Hayes," Brian put in. "Indeed I can well imagine how anxious you must be; but—excuse me, how came the young lady to be alone on the cliffs on so dark a night, and in her evening dress?"

"It is most unaccountable," Mrs. Strathay's voice struck in, "except on the supposition that her brain, her poor, overwrought brain, led her out of doors almost without her knowledge, and she wandered to the edge of the cliff and fell over. We can think of no other solution."

Mrs. Strathay's voice was singularly smooth and pleasant, and rang with genuine feeling, and after a pause she said:

"I was dismayed beyond words when after dinner I missed Gwen, and found she was nowhere in the house. My husband and I were nearly distracted, and when you met us we were driving in search of our lost darling."

The soft voice ceased, and Brian had time to cast his thoughts back over the events of the last hour and to wonder vaguely why, if they had been in search of their niece when he met them, the Strathays' carriage was driving at such a tremendous pace, and why no one appeared to be looking out of the window towards the moor.

He made some suitable reply, and in a very few more moments the carriage drew up before an iron gateway set in a wall, through which gateway they drove across what appeared to be a graveled courtyard, to a large building which gave Hayes the impression of solidity and gloom.

Mr. Strathay excused himself to Hayes while he helped the butler to carry Miss Marchmont upstairs. Hayes was ruminating

on the grimness of the place and all that had happened, when suddenly he gave a start at the sound of a suave voice at his elbow:

"Forgive my apparent discourtesy, Mr. Hayes, and allow me to show you to your room."

He was ashamed of that start, and yet he felt it was almost justified, for no footfall had broken the silence, neither had he seen Mr. Strathay descend the staircase which he had watched him ascend.

"I startled you," the smooth voice said, "but in this rambling old house we have so many stairs and passages, and I returned to the hall by a side staircase, because I wanted to make sure that our pleasantest guest chamber was in order. My wife has ordered some supper to be sent up there for you. We feel you would perhaps prefer this—it is late, and you must be tired out."

"We owe you a debt we can never hope to repay," Mr. Strathay said grandiloquently; "our dear niece's safety is entirely owing to you, and we should be barbarians indeed if we did not make you most heartily welcome."

The two men were now mounting a staircase, covered like the passage with the softest of carpets, and which led to a long corridor on the first floor, where a line of closed doors faced them.

"The house is far too large for us," Mr. Strathay said, waving his hand towards these doors, "my wife and I often say we feel quite lost here, but it is an old family inheritance, and we are fond of it in spite of its size and dreariness. I only trust you will be comfortable here," and so saying he opened the third door on the right and ushered Hayes into a large room, well furnished if dimly lighted.

"Please ask Gerard, our butler, for anything you may want," the host was beginning, "make yourself at home—and——"

"You are really too kind," Hayes broke in when the other paused, "and I ought to give you some account of myself before I allow you to give me your hospitality. My name, as I mentioned, is Brian Hayes, and I am making a walking tour in your delightful country by way of taking a pleasant holiday."

"A charming relaxation and change," Mr. Strathay murmured, "and if you live in town you must enjoy our moorland air."

"Yes, I live in London, and my work is there. I am in Gedstead's firm. Possibly you know the name?"

A little gleam, unobserved by Brian, shot into the watchful eyes of his host, but his voice was as non-committal as ever as he said :

"My dear sir, who does *not* know Messrs. Gedstead and Gedstead? To be ignorant of a business house as safe and nearly as important as the Bank of England would indeed be to argue oneself unknown. You are fortunate to be a clerk in such a firm."

"Oh!" Hayes replied, with a pleasant laugh, "I am higher than that. I am a partner in the firm—I need hardly say a junior partner!"

The soft entrance of the butler bearing a tray spread with a tempting little supper put an end to the conversation, and Mr. Strathay, after once more hoping that his guest would find everything comfortable, and begging him to make himself quite at home, bade him good-night and left the room.

"By Jove!" Hayes exclaimed, glancing round the room when he was alone, "this is rather better than a village pub. True Cornish hospitality," he added gleefully, as he drew a cosy arm-chair near to the table, which the butler had placed immediately in front of a bright little fire. As he sat alone he was struck by the intense silence, and an eerie feeling began to creep over him.

"Good Heavens!" he said aloud, rising impetuously, "I had better get into bed. That cliff business must have played the mischief with my nerves. I'm a regular old woman," and so saying, he moved across the room, whistling a gay little tune under his breath as a means of restoring his own spirits.

But somehow this whistling only served to make the silence more intolerable, and he desisted, going hastily across to the window, determined to open it and admit some sound of the night, even if it were only a whisper of wind.

The window was a French one, opening outwards, and there were thick wooden shutters outside, which he also flung open. Directly he had done so a muffled sound broke upon his ears which made him crane his head out into the darkness in unmitigated surprise.

The sound he heard was the noise of sullen breakers beating against the rocks, and, looking out, he saw heavy breakers below:

The house must be built on the very edge of the cliff, he thought, as, with fingers that trembled in spite of himself, he banged to the shutters and closed the window; on the

very edge, his reflections ran on, for it was evident that nothing intervened between his window and the awful abyss below.

Ashamed of his own tremors, yet unable to control them as he could have wished, he undressed hastily, and, having locked and bolted his door, he extinguished the lamp and tumbled into bed, and was soon asleep.

All at once he was awakened by a cry that penetrated his sleep, and made him start up with a confused idea of rushing to help the person who had cried out. Still heavy with sleep he lighted the candle by his bedside, and listened intently, but the silence was as profound as when he was last awake, and he began to fancy that the cry must have been merely a part of his dream, when once more it rang out upon the night—a long-drawn, agonised cry that froze the blood in his veins. Without a second more of hesitation he sprang from his bed, hastily drew on his clothes, and, candle in hand, went out into the passage that was dark and quiet as the grave. Shading his candle with one hand, he crept softly along the passage in what he believed to be the right direction, pausing every now and then to listen for any sound, but none came. A moment later he was face to face with Mr. Strathay, arrayed in a dark dressing-gown and advancing towards him with outstretched hand and so disturbed an expression that Hayes was convinced that something must be seriously wrong.

"My dear Mr. Hayes, I was on my way to your room," the dressing-gowned gentleman said eagerly; "I was so afraid you might have been disturbed, perhaps alarmed, by my poor niece. She—she"—his voice shook, his eyes furtively searched the other's face.

"Your niece?" Hayes exclaimed quickly; "was it she who cried out? I was very much startled, and came to see if I could be of any use. I thought someone was being terribly hurt."

"Poor, dear child," Mr. Strathay answered, growing less agitated as he proceeded, but shaking his head mournfully, whilst he led Hayes back towards his own room, "her adventure of yesterday has been too much for a brain already sensitive and easily overbalanced. She is quite delirious, and my wife and I have been in and out of her room all night."

"Can I do anything to help you?" Hayes asked; "can I fetch a doctor or make myself useful in any way?"

"Thank you very much," Mr. Strathay

said gratefully, "but we know exactly what to do for our dear Gwen. She has had these attacks before, and my wife's maid is an excellent nurse, and can manage my niece when no one else can do anything with her: I only trust you will not be disturbed again."

But scold himself as he would after his host had once more left him, Brian failed to shake off the uncanny impression which the house and its surroundings had made upon him: Why, if they were accustomed to their niece's strange attacks, had Mr. Strathay looked so terribly upset and disturbed? And why had he been so desperately anxious to hurry his guest back to his own room?

These questions repeated themselves over and over again in Brian's mind, but their solution was as far from him as ever when exhaustion at last brought its own relief, and he fell into a sound sleep that lasted till the sunlight poured into his room through the chinks of the shutters, and the butler's voice informed him that his hot water was outside the door. Brian jumped out of bed and flung wide the shutters.

In front of his window stretched a limitless expanse of sea. The house was apparently built upon a headland, for water surrounded it on three sides, and looking down from his window Brian's eyes rested on black, sharp rocks round which the waves fretted and foamed unceasingly.

"Not an altogether cheerful place for a young and nervous girl," was his thought as he left his room and found his way down the side staircase up which Mr. Strathay had brought him; "no wonder her brain is sometimes a trifle overwrought!"

The breakfast room in which his host awaited him looked into a small garden on the south side of the building, and was protected from the edge of the cliff by a wall made of the same solid rock of which the house itself was composed.

To Hayes' inquiries after Miss Marchmont her uncle replied that she was now much quieter, and was, indeed, asleep, and Mrs. Strathay, who came down at this moment, indorsed her husband's words.

"We shall be obliged to keep her in her room a few days," the lady said, "and by that time I trust she will be herself again."

"She is most anxious to see and thank you for your timely help last night, Mr. Hayes," Mr. Strathay here put in; "her first conscious words this morning were to that effect."

A vivid recollection of the fair, beautiful

face that had rested for a moment against his shoulder, of the lovely, appealing eyes, and the clutch of the tiny hands swept over Hayes, and he said eagerly:

"I did nothing, less than nothing, but I should like to see Miss Marchmont, and tell her how glad I am to have done even the little I did do."

A glance passed between husband and wife, and Mrs. Strathay, from her place behind the coffee-urn, leant forward and smiled a bewitching smile:

"But I hope you *will* see Gwen," she said, and Hayes was again struck by the singular charm of her voice. "We cannot let you go without a real rest; we quite hope you will stay with us for a few days, and enliven our solitude."

After breakfast Hayes wandered out into the garden, and chancing to lift his eyes to the massive building above him, he caught sight of something that suddenly arrested the tide of his satisfaction: Pressed against one of the upper windows was a face whose expression sent a renewed thrill of horror through his veins: It was deadly white, and even at a distance he could see upon it the lines of suffering and misery. He recognised at once the girl of whom his thoughts were full, Gwen Marchmont. He stood rooted to the spot, gazing up at her, and even as he gazed her two hands were lifted up beside her white face and waved distractedly in his direction, but it was evident she was not beckoning him towards her, but on the contrary, waving him away.

The whole episode had occupied only a few seconds of time, and scarcely had Hayes recognised that the white-faced girl was making some sort of signal, when she turned away from the window, with an abrupt, startled movement as though some sound in the room behind had frightened her. Hayes lingered a few moments longer in the hope that the face might appear again, but seeing no signs he returned to the house.

Nothing, indeed, could exceed the cordiality and kindness lavished upon their guest by both Mr. and Mrs. Strathay, and when, to his polite inquiries at lunch-time, the latter informed him that their niece was very much better, and they hoped she might be fit to come downstairs in the morning, he congratulated himself more than ever on his determination to remain at Trepuren. This, Mr. Strathay informed him, was the right name of the house, to his question why it had been called Devil's Pool? He said that this evil-sounding term had been given to it

by the country folk because of its position overhanging a certain pool in the rocks popularly supposed to be bottomless and haunted by the Evil One.

"From your window one looks directly into this pool," Mr. Strathay said with a smile, in reply to Hayes' further questions; "it is in a tiny bay carved out of the cliffs by the constant fret of the waves, and I fancy there is a certain amount of foundation for the people's belief that it is bottomless: My own theory is that it ends in a subterranean tunnel, which possibly goes back below the cliffs for a considerable distance: Be that as it may, it is a well-known fact that anything which goes into that pool never emerges again."

"What a ghastly place!" Hayes said, shivering. "I shall dream of it to-night!"

The two men were seated in the billiard-room window, smoking and chatting, and Mr. Strathay touched his guest's shoulder with a good-humoured laugh.

"We will move you to the other side of the house," he said, "I stupidly forgot last night that your window was so immediately opposite that ill-omened bay. Not that anything has happened there for many a long year," he added consolingly, "not since I inherited this house from an uncle some five years ago. My poor niece has a great horror of it, but it is out of sight from her window."

It was on the tip of the young man's tongue to mention at this moment that he had seen Miss Marchmont that morning, and to comment on her distraught appearance, but some unaccountable instinct held him silent, and the talk drifted away to other subjects.

"We are really selfishly glad to keep you here," Mrs. Strathay said to him at afternoon tea-time. "Our son telegraphs unexpectedly that he is coming down to-morrow to us, and his father and mother wish that he had someone of his own standing to join him in his various amusements."

Brian looked up interrogatively.

"We have a good deal of rough rabbit-shooting," the lady went on, "and by going to Berecastle, five miles along the coast, it is possible to get some deep sea fishing. My son also has a motor in which he will be delighted to drive you all over Cornwall."

"Your son lives here?" Hayes asked, when the lady paused.

"Alas, no! He has work in town, but he is very often with us, and he, like his father, is an enthusiastic bridge player, so

that his coming to-morrow is a most fortunate coincidence, for poor Gwen would be useless for cards at present. Tom is really a remarkably good player."

If the young man called "Tom" were half as charming as his father and mother, Hayes reflected as he went to bed that night, a guest's sojourn at Treparen would be increasingly delightful. He no longer occupied the room looking out on the Devil's Pool, but an equally comfortable apartment, whose aspect was towards the entrance courtyard, and occasional sounds from the stables to the right were a great relief from the appalling silence of the previous night.

For the best part of half-an-hour he had been deeply engrossed in a book he had brought up from the library, when a soft sound in the passage arrested his attention, and he lifted his head to listen intently. All was silent, but in a few seconds the same sound became audible, a shuffling, hesitating footstep, which all at once paused at his door. He rose quickly, thinking that perhaps Mr. Strathay had returned to speak to him, when a faint voice whispered through the keyhole:

"I want to speak to you—it is urgent."

The voice was that of a woman, very tremulous and frightened, and without a moment's hesitation Hayes opened the door to find standing before him the girl of whom his thoughts were full, Mr. Strathay's niece, Gwen Marchmont. Her breath came in short gasps, and she was panting with excitement or fright.

"What can I—" the young man began courteously, but she lifted her hand with an imperious gesture and gasped out:

"Hush — hush — they — will — hear you. There is—no time—to explain."

The sound of a closing door somewhere at the bottom of the house made her start as though she had been shot, and her hand went out towards the door post, and she leant against it for a second or two, breathing heavily.

"You must go—go at once—before he comes to-morrow. Go — to-night — for Heaven's sake go to-night. It—is—death—if you stay. Go quickly. I—have risked—all to warn you."

"But you," Brian exclaimed impulsively; "how can I go? If there is danger for me—is it—safe—"

"Hush!" she whispered sharply, "they—will not hurt me—not yet. But you must go, and"—she held her breath a moment

and listened with a painful, strained expression as again there was a sound of a closing door somewhere below. "They—are—coming up, I must fly," she almost sobbed out. "If you want to help me—and, oh! I beseech you to do it—go to Mr. Danston, 25 Essex Street, and tell him that I am here—that Joyce Darrell is here. It is the only way to save me—to help me. Go to him quickly."

"Joyce Darrell?" Hayes looked at her stupidly, whilst she gathered her wrapper about her, preparing to depart; "but I thought your name—"

"They call me Gwen Marchmont," she panted out, "but my name—hush—hush—they are coming up. Tell Mr. Danston—Joyce Darrell—"

A murmur of voices became audible from the corridor branching out of that in which Brian's room was situated. He could see the flickering light of a candle on the wall, and knew that in another second someone must appear round the bend of the passage. Not a moment too soon the girl sped away, her white form vanishing in the darkness, her sentence left unfinished.

Hayes shut his door noiselessly and extinguished his candle.

The voice of the girl who had just left him rang ceaselessly in his ears, the glance of her eyes, appealing, anguished, full of a deadly fear, seemed to be engraved upon his mind, her words haunted him with ghastly persistence.

"Go—go—to-night: It is death if you stay."

Her last passionate prayer to him to save her by going to Mr. Danston of Essex Street, appealed to all that was most chivalrous in his nature, and without more ado he lighted his lamp, packed his knapsack, and then opened his door with extremest care, to ascertain whether the household was at rest.

She had begged him to leave the house before "he" returned: Who was "he"? Was it the son to whom the Strathays had alluded? The son who would be so pleased to find a companion awaiting him? In that case why was it so urgently necessary to leave before Tom's return? He hesitated on the threshold of his door, mentally going over the whole conversation between himself and Miss Marchmont.

Miss Marchmont? But she had said her name was Joyce Darrell. Could it be that she was really insane after all, quite insane, but successfully simulating sanity?

No—no, he could not bring himself to believe in the theory of her mental weakness: That beautiful face, white and lined though it was, showed no signs of a feeble mind; those blue eyes, despite all their haunting misery, were as sane as his own; and there was nothing weak about the pitifully quivering lips, or the small, square chin.

No! She was in trouble, in acute trouble, perhaps danger; and she had said that her only hope of safety lay in his obedience to her behest, in his speedy visit to Mr. Danston; and without further pause he closed the door behind him, and stole down the passage in the direction of the main staircase. He had slipped a candle and matches into his pocket, and when he found himself unable to grope his way safely, he softly lighted the candle, and, shading it with his hand, crept into the great hall.

It was impossible to unbolt the front door noiselessly, but he remembered a French window opening on to the garden, which fastened with a hook. Through this he escaped from the house, then across the garden, over the wall, and on to the road, along which he set off at a round pace.

* * *

THE MISSING HEIRESS.

MR. DANSTON, senior partner of the famous firm of Danston and Danston, looked interrogatively at the tall young man in the doorway, and bowed slightly.

"Mr.—er—Hayes?" he said, glancing at the card in his hand just brought him by his clerk.

The young man also bowed and answered:

"Yes—Brian Hayes. I ventured to press for an interview although your clerk told me you were excessively busy. But my business is pressing."

"Please sit down, Mr. Hayes," the solicitor said, indicating a chair, "and may I ask you to be as brief as possible?"

"I have been asked to call on you by Miss Joyce Darrell," began Hayes. "She—"

"What did you say?" The solicitor almost shouted the words: "Who did you say had sent you here?"

"Miss Joyce Darrell," the young man repeated. "She begged—"

"But my dear sir—my dear sir," the elder man interrupted excitedly, "have you any idea what extraordinary news you are bringing me? Where is Miss Darrell? Good Heavens, man, where is she?"

"In Cornwall, at a house called Trepren, nearly nine miles from Trethwiel station."

"In Cornwall?" Mr. Danston leant back in his chair and looked at the speaker with stupefied eyes. "But how—but why—and—"

"With her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Strathay," Brian here interrupted, feeling bewildered by the lawyer's perturbation: "She was called—"

"Her uncle and aunt—*her—uncle—and—*aunt." The solicitor rose impetuously and strode up and down the room: "What name do you say? These are wheels within wheels."

"Strathay was the name," Brian said quietly, trying in vain to imagine a cause for such intense agitation, "and the young lady is called by them Gwen Marchmont."

"Gwen Marchmont." The lawyer seemed unable to do more than repeat the word blankly. "But are we speaking of the same person? You say you come from Joyce Darrell—and then—you talk of her as Gwen Marchmont. I confess I fail to understand."

"I cannot tell you why the young lady I saw possesses two names. All that I definitely know is that she begged me to come to you, and to tell you that Joyce Darrell—she repeated the name twice—that Joyce Darrell was at Trepren, the house in Cornwall I have just mentioned to you. I believe she is in great danger."

"Danger? Danger? The whole thing becomes more and more mysterious. But the main fact is subject for unfeigned joy: Joyce Darrell is found at last; it seems too wonderful to be true. We have been looking for her for months. Advertisement, detectives, secret agents, all alike have proved useless. Joyce Darrell vanished completely, and now—you tell me she is found. Perhaps you are aware that a large reward was offered to anyone discovering her?"

Hayes shook his head.

"I never heard of her until the day before yesterday," he said, "and I certainly had no notion she was missing and being advertised for."

"Will you tell me a few particulars about her now?" Mr. Danston said, speaking quietly, with an evident effort. "You say she explained nothing to you? She did not tell you why she left her home so suddenly?"

"I met her under somewhat exceptional circumstances," Hayes replied; and he then proceeded to tell the solicitor of his walk along the Cornish coast, of his rescue of the

girl from the cliff, and of the subsequent events that had taken place at Trepren. The elder man listened intently, only now and then giving utterance to an exclamation of astonishment or anger, but when Hayes wound up by telling him of the agonised face and words of the girl who had bidden him come to Mr. Danston, the lawyer exclaimed impetuously:

"Heaven grant she may come to no harm: And she said you must get away before he came back. To whom did that refer?"

"I concluded it referred to Mr. Strathay's son, whose name is Tom: I gathered he was to arrive yesterday—and—"

"Tom—Tom—" Mr. Danston's face turned ashen white. "If it is Tom Stainer, if that fiend is on her track, we may be too late—too late!" and for a moment he dropped his head into his hands with a low groan.

"May I ask for a few particulars of the young lady?" Hayes asked deferentially, after a long pause. "I feel a natural interest in her, after all that has happened, and more especially after all that you have said."

"There is no secret about her story; in fact, I am only surprised you have not heard it before. Joyce Darrell was the only daughter and heiress of an enormously wealthy man, who died, leaving every penny of his great fortune to her, and appointing as her guardian until she came of age, or married, a Mr. Stainer, who had for some time been his secretary and close friend."

"The Tom Stainer you spoke of?"

"No—his elder brother, and a man in whom Mr. Darrell had the profoundest trust, more trust than I considered was altogether justified. This Mr. Stainer was, as I say, made Miss Darrell's guardian, and it was arranged that he and his wife should live with her in her house in Portman Square."

"Is Mr. Stainer's wife a handsome, dark woman of great fascination and considerably younger than himself?" Hayes here questioned, the picture of Mrs. Strathay's striking features and charm of manner suddenly crossing before him:

"Tall and handsome—dear me, no," was the reply—a little amused smile broke up the perplexity and trouble on the lawyer's features—"she is a small mouse of a woman, with a nervous manner, nondescript colouring, and grey hair. There is nothing fascinating or handsome about poor Mrs. Stainer. What made you think there was?"

"Because Mrs. Strathay is a strikingly good-looking woman, and I wondered whether she and Mrs. Stainer could be one and the same person. But my idea was obviously a wild one, for your description of Mrs. Stainer tallies in no single particular with Mrs. Strathay of Trepren."

"We shall understand all that now seems incomprehensible when we have brought Miss Darrell away from this Cornish fastness, where she is plainly detained under compulsion," Mr. Danston said thoughtfully, "but how she comes to be there or what has happened, it is beyond me to guess."

"Did she leave her own house unexpectedly, then?"

"Nearly nine months ago I called at the house on business. I was her father's solicitor, and she retained me in the same position. To my surprise, when the butler appeared, he told me that Miss Darrell had left home with Mr. and Mrs. Stainer, the party being accompanied by Mr. Tom Stainer. He firmly declared that Miss Darrell had gone away against her will."

"But Mr. Stainer and his wife were with her?"

"'Yes, sir' the man answered, 'but Miss Darrell was set against going all the same. And that Mr. Tom Stainer is a ruffian if ever I saw one!'"

"My own opinion marched with his there. My cursory acquaintance with Mr. Tom taught me to regard him as a thoroughpaced villain, and it invariably made my blood boil when I saw him talking to Miss Joyce, and, to the best of my belief, making love to her."

"What was he like?" Hayes asked, the question prompted rather by the jealous anxiety of a lover than by any real interest in the young man under discussion.

"A ruffianly-looking brute," was the terse answer; "a handsome face enough, smooth-shaven, with olive skin, and very curious eyes, light brown in colour, shading into golden lights that never failed to remind me of the eyes of a cat."

"By Jove!" Hayes exclaimed excitedly, jumping from his chair, "I met a man with eyes like that in the street here not half-an-hour ago. He was loafing along in an indefinite sort of way, and appeared to be waiting for someone. His eyes struck me at once, they were so unusual."

"You saw him here, in Essex Street?" The lawyer was also on his feet, and the two men moved simultaneously to the window: "Could he have been watching you?"

"Watching me? But why?"

"Because I have never got over my first impression that Joyce Darrell's disappearance had some connection with that man. He wished to marry her, she told me so herself, and she told me she loathed him."

"Did Mr. and Mrs. Stainer help this man, this Tom?"

"Mrs. Stainer was a mere nonentity, and like putty in the hands of her husband and his brother. I never liked Mr. Stainer, but I looked upon him as a harmless, if somewhat shifty, individual. If Miss Darrell had gone away only with her guardian and his wife, I should have felt less disturbed, but the brother Tom was with them, and somehow this fact appalled me as it appalled the butler and the other servants."

"He's up to no good, that Mr. Tom isn't," the butler repeated incessantly, and when days and weeks went by and not a syllable came from Miss Darrell, my uneasiness increased hourly. Not a word of Joyce's whereabouts came to her own house; the only shred of information we received, if you can call it information, was a note received by the housekeeper in Miss Darrell's handwriting. It merely ordered that the servants should be dismissed, and the house shut up and left in the hands of a caretaker. Money was inclosed for wages, and that was all."

"The letter was posted in London. I grew more and more disturbed as time went on and still no tidings of Miss Darrell reached me. At last important papers came in, needing her signature, and I advertised for her in every conceivable paper, but with no result. I did not wish to make too big a hue and cry, or draw public attention too much to her disappearance, but I put the police on to the work of finding her, and offered a reward. All my efforts were entirely unavailing. Until you came here this morning I had no notion where Joyce Darrell was, and whether she was alive or dead."

"And now?"

"Now I shall go to Cornwall, armed with a search warrant, and the authority of the law, and bring her away from Trepren. There is no doubt in my mind as to the identity of Mr. Tom Strathay; he must be Tom Stainer masquerading under another name. About his so-called father and mother I feel more uncertain. Are the Strathays really the Stainers, who have taken a new name for precaution's sake? If not, what

has become of the Stainers, for they have disappeared as entirely as Miss Darrell?"

That same afternoon an express train bore the lawyer and Hayes swiftly towards the west, and at early dawn they arrived in a trap at Trepuren.

The whole place appeared wrapped in a profound slumber, and as Hayes, feeling chilled to the bone, dismounted stiffly from the back seat of the dog cart, he was struck as he had been before, by the deadly stillness, the almost tangible silence, broken only by the sullen, muffled roar of the surf that beat on the black rocks under the cliffs.

After several peals of the bell a footfall was at last heard on the stones of the courtyard, and with a great unbolting and unbarring the door swung slowly open, to disclose a little, shriveled-up old man, clad in a motley collection of garments and blinking like an owl startled from his sleep at noonday. He grumbled loudly at the disturbance, but Mr. Danston cut him short with the stern words:

"We have come on urgent business to see Mr. Strathay. Take us in and call him at once."

A harsh laugh broke from the old man's lips.

"Mr. Strathay?" he said. "I dunno where I'm goin' to find he. He bain't here, that I do know."

"Well, Mrs. Strathay, then," the lawyer answered impatiently, pushing his way into the courtyard, Hayes close at his heels, "or Mr. Tom Strathay. Call someone at once. Perhaps Miss Darrell could come to me."

"There bain't nobody here, only me and my old woman, and I didn't never hear of nobody called Miss Darrell."

"*Nobody here?*" Hayes seized the old fellow's arm. "Where have they gone? They were here two days ago."

"Aye, for sure, so they were, so they were"—a senile chuckle accompanied the words—"but the quality they do be very queer, very queer they do be. They be all gone from here since yesterday forenoon—and—"

"Where have they gone? I will give you a five pound note if you can tell me that," Hayes exclaimed.

The old eyes gleamed avariciously, and the shake of the head was very doleful.

"If I could earn that note, I'd surely do it," was the regretful response. "I dunno where they're gone. Yesterday forenoon they drove away—the master and the

missus, and the young lady, the master's niece. Aye, and crying and wringing her hands she was too, poor, pretty lady."

"Good Heavens!" cried Brian, his heart contracting pitifully when he thought of the fair, sweet face and the blue eyes drowned in tears. "Where have these fiends taken her? Was Mr. Tom Stainer with them?"

"Mr. Tom Strathay you'd be meaning, sir," the old man answered; "no—he warn't there. Come here he did day afore yesterday and went away again in a terrible hurry and temper. But he didn't come yesterday; only a yellow envelope come."

"Yellow envelope?" For a moment Hayes and the lawyer looked at one another with mystified eyes. Then Mr. Danston exclaimed:

"Why, of course, I see it all. Tom Stainer came down here, heard of your arrival and abrupt departure, possibly put two and two together, went back to town, and saw you come to my office. You met him in Essex Street!"

"Yes, I suppose I met him in Essex Street," Hayes answered in a dull tone. "I suppose it is as you say—and they have taken her—where?"

"Ah, where indeed?" The old caretaker and his still older wife willingly allowed the two men to go over the house, but they discovered no clue that could be of the slightest use to them.

"It is terrible to think they have escaped us," Mr. Danston said. "We will make every inquiry in the neighbourhood, and then return to London to begin afresh the search that has already lasted for nearly nine months."

"And if it lasts nine times nine months," Brian answered, his teeth set close, "I vow I will go on searching till I find her. Yes—if it costs me life itself."

* * *

A CRUEL PROPOSAL.

"YOU were very clever, my dear Marion, but not quite clever enough." The words were spoken with a sneer, but the recipient of that sneer was evidently accustomed to the speaker's sarcasm, for she only raised her well marked eyebrows and laughed lightly.

"Your humour is of such a heavy order, Tom," she answered, lying up in the arm-chair that was drawn close to a huge fire and fanning herself with a huge fan; "we did what seemed best at the moment, and if

that poor fool had been a shade more foolish, we might have plucked him too. Besides which I sometimes think that he was warned."

"Warned? By whom? Who knew anything of our plans excepting Ralph and yourself?"

"What about—your white-faced girl?" The woman in the arm-chair lifted a pair of velvety brown eyes to the face of the man beside her, and dropped her voice significantly.

"I wish to goodness you would stop speaking of Joyce in that way," the young man said irritably; "and how could she possibly have warned this man, this Hayes? Why on earth Ralph ever invited him to the house at all, unless he meant the Devil's Pool to receive him as it did——"

"Hu-ush!" the woman exclaimed, sitting bolt upright and glancing sharply round her, "remember sometimes walls have ears, and there is no need to—to——"

"To let the world know what pretty schemes a brain like yours can hatch, Marion! Remember from what Ralph took you."

A deep flush that might have been either anger or confusion dyed crimson the ashen grey of the woman's face, and her eyes dropped beneath the hard, scornful stare of those light brown eyes. Her voice took on a cringing tone strangely different from that in which she had hitherto spoken:

"Well, Tom," she said, "there is no need to drag up against me a past that is over and done with. Your brother loved me and made me his wife." Tom laughed shortly, but he did not speak, and she continued still in those deprecating accents:

"I know how deeply grateful I ought to be to him—and so I am, and if—I've helped him a little, I'm sure I'm glad."

"Helped him a little,"—again Tom laughed, a laugh that froze the blood in the veins of someone sitting upstairs, who overheard it—"you call that game with the Devil's Pool 'helping him a little.' Helped him by getting rid of——"

"For Heaven's sake be quiet," the woman exclaimed, her deprecating tones changed to those of ungovernable fury, her hand suddenly laid over his mouth to stifle the words he tried to say. "Why not let bygones be bygones; am I not helping you to play your game?"

"With no hope of reward, of course," he sneered, shaking himself free of her hand;

"you expect nothing for all the efforts you have made to bring about my wishes?"

"Don't be a fool," she retorted shortly; "to give nothing for nothing is not my plan in life, especially when the forfeits may be remarkably heavy. I expect to receive—what you promised me—if I could get the girl to listen to you. Well! I have done my part, though what you can see in a white-faced fool like that is beyond me to imagine."

"Quite beyond you, I should think," he answered brutally, "as far beyond as light is beyond darkness; and if I happen to prefer light that is my affair."

"Prefer light," her voice rang with scorn: "Is it the woman you care for or her vast fortune? Ah! My dear Tom, I may be a knave, I am not prepared to deny it, but I am not a fool, no one can lay that accusation at my door!"

Scowling at her fiercely, and with a muttered oath, the man turned and left the room, to run up a flight of dark stairs, and unlock a door on the first landing. The room he entered was one of those typically cheerless apartments which grace a London lodging house; it was dingy, dirty, ill furnished, and its outlook upon the blank white wall of a house in a back lane was far from cheerful.

A girl crouched beside the window, her huddled form looking very small and pitiful in the depths of the horsehair arm-chair, which rocked wildly on its shaky legs when she pulled herself into an upright position.

"You!" she said breathlessly, her blue eyes looking fearfully at the intruder: "Why have you come again so soon?"

"So soon? My dear Miss Darrell, it is twenty-four hours since we met." His fawning voice, and the look of bold admiration in his eyes gave her a sensation of sickness.

"Why do you keep on coming to torment me?" she said wearily, her white face seeming to grow whiter under his insolent stare. "I have given you my answer, the only one I shall ever give: I will never, never become your wife."

"We shall see about that," was the angry retort. "You are our prisoner, and escape from here is a sheer impossibility." He glanced at the blank wall opposite, and into the covered area far, far below the window: "I will never let you go till you give in."

"And I have told you that I will never do that," she answered; "my life has been one long horror for months, but still I will

never do what you wish, not even if you get rid of me as you got rid of Mrs. Stainer."

Her eyes looked full into his and involuntarily he winced.

"Mrs. Stainer," he answered, trying to speak nonchalantly. "Are you alluding to my sister-in-law? And what do you mean by got rid of?"

"You know to whom I am alluding, to the dear, kindly lady who was your brother's wife before that fiend downstairs married him. Do you think I believed the story they told me about my kind old friend? Where is *my* Mrs. Stainer? What did you do with her? Where is she now?"

"You had better ask the lady you so politely called the fiend," he responded with a laugh, as he turned and left the room, locking the door behind him, and leaving the girl standing still beside the window with her hands tight clasped, and wildly beating heart, saying to herself over and over again:

"They frighten me, they frighten me, but they shall not drive me mad. Only sometimes I wish he had not saved me from the cliff. And yet—and yet, I should be glad he did, if only I might see his face again."

* * * *

"Look here, Marion, it is useless shilly-shallying. London will soon be too hot to hold us, and it is nonsense to say we are safe here."

"There is no safer place for hiding anyone, my dear Ralph; we are lost in its hugeness."

"Oh, no, we are not. Please to remember that my brother and I are not of the obscure origin that—that——"

The speaker stumbled and paused, as his wife's eyes fixed themselves scathingly on his face.

"I am not ashamed of my obscure origin," she answered slowly; "obscurity is convenient in our present circumstances, and I prefer it. But let me tell you I am getting heartily sick of this hole-in-the-corner business, and if that fool upstairs holds out much longer I shall chuck it."

"And chuck—what Tom has promised?" The voice that spoke the words was tremulous.

"Tom's promises are built on an insecure foundation, aren't they?" the woman replied roughly. "No girl—no money, and I tell you what, Ralph, it's my opinion he's as likely to get that girl as he is to be made Emperor of Germany."

"Then we are ruined, simply ruined," the other replied, throwing up his hands with a weak, impatient gesture. "I was honest with you, Marion," he almost whined. "I told you of my financial position. I told you that the money was an absolute necessity. If Darrell had only left it in my hands instead of in the hands of that strait-laced ass, Danston, we should never have had to resort to all these crooked ways. So long as I have you I am happy, and would do anything, as I have done before. You have bewitched me, my dear, you can make me do or be what you will."

"Can I?" was the scornful retort. "I wish I could make a man of you to start with. There, don't look so hurt," she added, laughing a soft, caressing laugh when she saw the pain in his face, and holding out her hand to him with a tender gesture. "I say more than I mean, but I get irritated sometimes. That girl upstairs gets on my nerves with her obstinacy and wilfulness, and you seemed so depressed, and everything combined to make me cross. Forgive me, Ralph."

Once more her fascination drew him back to her as she knew it was bound to do. He looked deep into her eyes and fancied he read in them love for himself; he knelt by her side and kissed her passionately, and when she ran her fingers through his iron-grey hair he felt that nothing was wanting in his cup of bliss. He did not know that when, later on, he left her and went out, she rose and stretched herself with a yawn, saying:

"Oh, Lord, what fools these mortals be! Does he think I married and endured all I have endured because I loved him? Bless his silly soul! I meant to have that money, and I mean to have it; but if our original plan fails, I think I can concoct another. Perhaps, Master Tom, I can put a spoke in your wheel and find a means of growing rich and circumventing you at the same time! Your methods have failed. Supposing now I make a fresh move—and try—mine."

* * *

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY.

DURING the past few weeks Brian Hayes had found himself able to pay but scant attention to business. His soul was wrapped up in the one overwhelming longing to find the girl whose lovely face had produced upon him such a strange and lasting effect, and

before that consuming desire every other thought and wish faded into insignificance.

"Whoever has kidnapped her is paying for her support," the lawyer said grimly one day, when he and Hayes for the thousandth time discussed the strange affair. "Miss Darrell, to the best of my knowledge, had not more than one hundred pounds or so in her hands at the time she left home, and I have ascertained from the banks that no cheques in her name have since been drawn. I hope she is costing the wretches dear, wherever they have taken her."

"I thought I saw that villain with the light brown eyes yesterday," Hayes said between his teeth; "if I had only been near enough to get at him I felt like gripping him by the throat and shaking the breath out of him."

"Where did you see him?" The lawyer looked up sharply.

"I was on an omnibus driving down the Marylebone Road; he was going into Baker Street station. I was off that 'bus in double quick time; but whether he had a season ticket or not I don't know; anyhow, he had vanished before I reached the platform, and the tail lights of a train going eastwards were disappearing into the tunnel."

"Surely we must find Miss Darrell soon," Mr. Danston spoke musingly; "the public is roused to interest now. Her photograph is outside every police station, her description in every newspaper. One cannot see how, in a civilised country, she can be much longer hidden."

"She may have been taken abroad."

"The police in foreign countries have been furnished with all particulars about her, and—her personality is not one to be easily overlooked."

"Indeed it is not," Brian answered fervently, so fervently that the lawyer, remembering his own youth, smiled.

"You take a rather unusual interest in my client, Hayes," he said, looking kindly into the young man's frank face.

Brian flushed hotly as he answered with great simplicity:

"I daresay it may seem extraordinary to you, perhaps even absurd, but though I only saw her twice, she has grown to be the only woman in the world for me! We met under exceptional circumstances, so exceptional that they must be my excuse. But I cannot put her white, lovely face out of my mind; I cannot forget the blue, appealing eyes that looked into mine; her voice haunts me day and night. Call me a fool if you

like. The memory of Joyce Darrell fills my whole heart."

"A fool?" the elder man answered very gently and with a sigh, "no—you will not get that name from me. I have remained unmarried all my life because I was a fool, too. Is it folly? Or is it divinest wisdom?" He laid his hand almost tenderly on Brian's shoulder.

"For one woman's sake I have been lonely all my days. Heaven grant that you may not be lonely, too, for the sake of a woman!"

* * *

"You promise?"

"I promise—on my honour."

"Your honour." A faint, sad smile flickered over the white face of the girl who spoke. "Can I trust to—that?"

"It is all there is for you to trust in," came the answer in a woman's voice, musical, clear, and low; "or if you prefer another word than honour—say you trust to my cupidity. I—want the money—you want—what I can give you."

"But will you give it me? Will you give it me after all, even if I agree to your demand?—that is the question."

The elder woman shrugged her shoulders.

"You must take something on trust," she answered. "You are sick of durance vile; so am I. I offer you a way out; you can accept it or not—as you please."

For several seconds Joyce Darrell looked gravely into the dark, beautiful face that confronted her, as though weighing deeply the chances for and against the honesty of the speaker. Then she said:

"You mean that if I write the cheque, I shall be able to leave this house, this prison?"

"If you write for the sum I have named you will be left here unwatched, unguarded, and a message will be sent to those who are looking for you. There is no doubt that they will come to your rescue."

"Who will come?" the girl asked quickly, the colour flying over her face: "Who is looking for me?"

"The lawyer you are fond of quoting, that Mr. Danston—and—to the best of my knowledge the person who was obliging enough to drag you up from the face of the cliff."

Joyce's colour deepened:

"Why—why should he come?" she faltered. "I—do not even know his name."

"Your ignorance can soon be remedied; his name is Hayes, and—it is thanks to him

that we were forced to leave Trepren. I owe him no gratitude."

"Thanks to *him*?" — the girl's eyes softened and glowed—"how did he—?"

"Perhaps you know best how and why he went to Mr. Danston," was the almost vicious reply. "Anyhow he went—and now—I am sick of the whole business. If you do what I ask you, you shall be free—and Tom—"

"What of him?"

All the colour died out of Joyce's face again, she shuddered violently. "Where is he? If you leave me here alone, will he not come back and find me utterly at his mercy? I—am afraid of him, do not let him find me here alone!"

As she spoke she went closer to the other woman, and touched her arm with trembling fingers:

"I do not know whether you ever had a child of your own," she went on in low, wavering tones, "but if you had, think what you would feel if your child were in danger and afraid as I am—as I am: Be good to me now."

An extraordinary change swept suddenly over the dark face, whose expression held in it so much more of evil than of good. Its hard lines softened strangely, tears welled suddenly into the brown eyes. She put her hand on Joyce's shoulder, not roughly, but with an almost tender touch.

"Why did you say that about—my child?" she whispered, a sob catching her breath: "I had a child once—a little blue-eyed girl—who might, God knows, have grown up like you, and then maybe I should have lived a better life: She went away from me when she was a little, toddling mite of four, a little, toddling mite with blue eyes and yellow, tangled curls, and a voice that made my heart glad!" Her sobs grew heavier, the tears rained down her face.

"My little girl died, and after that I think I gave myself to wickedness. My first husband, my little girl's father, was a bad man; he had broken my heart long before. I had never known any goodness in my life except my little girl's innocence, and when she died it broke my heart. I went down and down, dragging others with me as I went, because I was strong, as well as wicked. I dragged Ralph down with the rest."

"You poor thing, oh, you poor thing!" Joyce whispered gently. "I am so sorry for you, so very, very sorry."

"I am not worth your sorrow; scorn and

contempt are the only fit things for me. I see it now, now that you have made me think of my little, innocent girl, whom I shall never see again—never again."

"Hush—oh, hush!" Joyce answered, putting her arms round the sobbing woman, and soothing her tenderly: "If you are sorry for all the wrong things you have done, if you try to begin afresh to do better, you will see your little girl again: I know you will, I am sure of it, quite, quite sure."

"If I thought that," the woman cried fiercely—"if I thought God would forgive me as much as that I would struggle all the rest of my days to live rightly, for the sake of seeing my baby again: I had the will to do evil; I have the will now to do good."

"I am sure you have—and—when you go away from here with what I shall sign for you, you and Mr. Stainer must begin afresh, and try to leave evil behind you for ever."

"How could I take your money now?" the weeping woman said brokenly: "I have tried to harm you; I helped Tom in his hideous schemes: I have done all I could to injure you; how can I take your money?"

"You will take it to help you to begin the new life you have promised to live," the girl answered firmly: "You and my guardian must go away—quite away to other countries and fresh surroundings where it is easier to start again; and some day you will write and tell me of that new life."

Whilst she spoke she had moved to the table, and from a desk upon it drawn a cheque book, in which she deliberately wrote a cheque. This she tore from the book, and, putting it into an envelope, handed the whole to the woman, who still crouched sobbing in the big horsehair chair.

"I did not know there was such goodness in the world," she said, bending to press a fervent kiss on Joyce's hand; "all my life I have played the game for myself alone, excepting when I had my baby with me: She kept me good, and now—now that I see how you forgive, I can believe in God's forgiveness; I can try to keep good again, for my baby's sake—and yours."

She rose heavily, her whole figure drooping with intense misery.

"I must go now," she said. "Tom is away till to-night; you will be fetched before then. Ralph is coming back for me to join him, and Mortimer, our maid, goes with us. You will be here in the house—alone—"

till they come," the woman's voice continued mechanically, "then——"

"Why cannot I go now?" Joyce pleaded. "Let me go away at once from this dreary place—let me go home."

The other hesitated, and at that moment a step sounded on the stairs, and Ralph Stainer's furtive face appeared in the doorway.

"Come, Marion," he said, "is it all arranged? It is time we went."

Joyce looked coldly at her guardian, there was contempt in her glance before which he visibly cringed.

"It is arranged," she said haughtily, "and you and your wife must let me go home."

Ralph looked from his wife's tear-stained face to Joyce's scornful one, and his mouth set tight in lines of weak obstinacy.

"You will stay here," he answered sullenly, "and—if you have arranged all—Marion, come at once."

"Wait," Joyce said imperiously, "there is one question I must ask you first. What have you done with your first wife, Mr. Stainer? Where is my dear, kindly old friend? What have you done to her?"

A sickly yellow hue overspread the man's furtive countenance, and he said never a word. But his wife answered for him.

"I was evil—I have told you I was evil, Joyce Darrell, and I wished her out of my way. But as there is a Heaven above us, I never meant her to be put out of it as Tom planned it—ask Tom—the—Devil's Pool."

With that they left the room, locking the door behind them:

FREEING THE CAPTIVE.

BRIAN HAYES glanced at the note an express messenger had brought to his office, and then looked at his clerk with so sudden a burst of laughter that the man experienced grave doubts of his master's sanity.

"Things will have to manage themselves to-day," he said, rising from his place, and ramming back into the envelope the note and the latch-key it had contained. "I shall not be back until to-morrow."

The contents of that note danced incessantly before his eyes.

"Go to 131 Ryner Street, Boro'; enter with this latch-key; you will find Joyce Darrell in the top back room."

His natural instinct was to fly straight off

to 131 Ryner Street, but he had still just enough commonsense left to call at a police station, explain the circumstances, and take with him two stalwart officers. Thus provided with help in case of emergency (if after all, he thought, as his first excitement cooled, the note might be a trap), he made his way as fast as a cab could take him to the house indicated in the note.

It was a desolate house in a grim street of desolate houses, and it wore a deserted, unlived-in appearance that made the young man's heart sink with apprehension. The latch-key fitted the lock, however, and this roused his spirits to fresh hopefulness, and he and the two officers entered, investigating every room they passed on their way upstairs as a precaution against a possible ambush.

The top back room was reached at last, and Brian Hayes, finding the door locked, hastily turned the key which was outside, and looked in. A low cry broke from him, a simultaneous cry rose from the occupant of the room, and the two police officers discreetly withdrew, leaving the young man to enter alone.

Joyce was on her feet, her white face turned towards the door, her blue eyes wide with fear and suspense.

Brian ran forward and caught her two small, shaking hands in his, and looked down at her fair, bent head with a passion of tenderness in his eyes, a tenderness that impelled him to treat her as if she were really a child when she clung to him with little, frightened sobs.

"Am I safe?" she whispered. "Am I really safe?"

"Quite—quite safe," he answered. "I am going to take you away with me directly."

"And—and—he won't come near me again? Promise me I will not have to see him again."

"You shall not see anyone you do not wish to see, dear," he replied, speaking very soothingly. "Of whom are you so afraid?"

"Of Tom—Tom Stainer," she shivered and clung to him afresh, setting all his pulses throbbing, as he felt the clinging touch of her hands; "he—he—oh! I hate him, I hate him."

"You shall never see or hear of him again if I can help it," the young man cried vehemently, passion for a moment mastering him. "I have found you at last—my sweet-heart—I will never let you go."

The sense of his words reached her confused brain. She drew a little away from him and

her face flushed rosily, though she still allowed her hands to rest in his.

"Why—do you call me that?" she faltered, her eyes drooping under his eager gaze. "I—you—I mean I am like a stranger to you, although you were so good to me."

"I have thought of you and dreamt of you and nothing but you since the day I first saw you lying senseless and white at my feet upon the heather," was Brian's quick reply, all his self-imposed restraint vanishing before the shy, sweet look in her eyes, the flushes that came and went over her lovely face. "Don't you believe"—he drew her closely into the shelter of his arms, and bent his face very near to hers—"don't you believe in love at first sight?"

For want of a better place to hide it in she buried her face in his coat, and her answer was so muffled that he was obliged to bend his head till it touched her soft hair before he could hear her whispered answer.

"Yes—I—do," she said, "because—"

"Because—what?" He put one hand gently under her chin and lifted her embarrassed face to his.

"Because—I—remembered—too," she said, and tried to bury her face once more. But Brian laughed softly, a laugh of overwhelming happiness, and laid his lips gently on hers.

* * * *

"And now do you feel you can tell us the whole story, dear?" Brian said to Joyce, when later on in the same evening he and Mr. Danston were seated with her in the drawing-room of the lawyer's own house, where she was to stay, chaperoned by his elderly sister, pending the opening of her house. "Can you bear to tell us now all that happened?"

"I should like to tell you," she answered. "I feel safe now—and I do not think that horrible Tom Stainer could find me here."

"He will not find you anywhere," Brian answered grimly: "The house in which we found you is in charge of the police, and when the gentleman returns there, as he doubtless will to-night, he will find himself in the clutches of the law!"

"How did you escape from those wretches?" Mr. Danston asked. "I do not quite understand why they allowed you to go, or who communicated with Hayes."

"I think Mr. Stainer and his new wife became tired of keeping me a prisoner," Joyce returned slowly; "she came to me this morning and told me that if I would give her a cheque for five thousand pounds

she and her husband would leave me, and would let my friends know where I was."

"Five thousand pounds!" Mr. Danston exclaimed aghast; "but my dear young lady, of course you will stop the cheque? You must not be robbed in this outrageous fashion. It is monstrous."

"Even if I could stop it, which I do not suppose is possible now," Joyce answered gently, "I should not wish to do so. I gave them the money freely. I want them to go away with it, and—start afresh. I am sorry for that poor woman."

"Sorry for her?" It was Brian's voice:

"Yes—very, very sorry. She had no chances—all her surroundings were evil. She lost her little girl. Oh, it must be so hard to be good when you have no chances at all, and I want to help her to begin again."

The two men were silent for awhile, then Mr. Danston said:

"And now will you tell us how you were first taken from your own house—and why?"

"It was Tom Stainer's arrangement," the girl replied, with the shudder that always accompanied any reference to this man; "he had pestered me unceasingly to marry him, and he would not listen to my repeated refusals. Being my guardian's brother he came to the house occasionally, and his visits at last became so frequent that I rebelled and declared I would not allow him to enter my doors again. Then he hatched this vile plot, helped, as I afterwards found, by a certain Mrs. Hastings, the woman who became later the wife of my guardian, Mr. Ralph Stainer. His first wife, my dear, kind friend, was then alive, and did her best to help me, but she was a meek little woman entirely under the mastery of her husband and his terrible brother. The two men introduced into my house a maid called Mortimer, who was ostensibly Mrs. Stainer's maid, but really a spy on me; and then they pretended that I was going mad, and they insisted on watching me closely and never leaving me alone. I could not even write a letter."

"Finally the Stainers and Tom insisted upon my going away with them. They found it impossible to coerce me whilst I was in my own house. They hoped for better things when they got me to that ghastly place in Cornwall, Trepuren. That house belonged to Tom Stainer, it had been left him by his godfather, and a better place for nefarious schemes was never built. I was kept a close prisoner under Mortimer's care, and my life was a daily, an hourly torture. My dear friend Mrs. Stainer was

kept away from me, and then, one day, Mortimer told me she was dead.

"At that time I heard vague words about the Devil's Pool, that awful whirlpool under the rocks, and Mortimer told me I should be hidden for ever there, too, unless I gave in to Tom Stainer's wishes. All this time he was imploring me to marry him, and promising me freedom if I would consent to do it; and sometimes in my misery I nearly yielded. Thank God—not quite.

"Then my troubles were increased when, six weeks after Mrs. Stainer's mysterious death, Mr. Ralph Stainer brought a woman to me, and said she was his second wife. She had been that Mrs. Hastings of whom I spoke, and she was very beautiful, you know how beautiful, Brian, but she was evil, and she added to the hardness of my life. They called themselves Strathay, and me their niece, Gwen Marchmont, and she jeered at me for not marrying Tom. She made me wild with misery and fear, and at last, one night, when Mortimer left my door unlocked, I escaped. I thought I could get right away, but the night was dark, I missed the road, and, stumbling across the heather, I fell over that awful cliff from which you rescued me, Brian."

She was silent for a moment before resuming.

"They did not want me to die, because if I died they ran no chance of getting my money, and they wanted my money above everything, though Tom Stainer loved me in his evil way. You know the rest. I warned you, Brian, because I was sure they would do as they had done to others who came—fleece you at cards and then help you to disappear into that awful black

water at the foot of the cliffs. It was Tom Stainer who found that means of disposing of the robbed victims; there were two men who disappeared in that way. I overheard Tom and Mortimer whispering about it. I do not think Ralph Stainer and his wife were accessories to those added horrors. When they found Brian had gone they were furious with anger, and Tom, who arrived on the morning after his escape, had seen him at the station. He followed Brian to London, and, seeing him at Mr. Danston's office, wired instantly to his brother, who brought me at once to the house in Southwark where you found me."

Two days later the news reached them of the judgment that had befallen that most hardened scoundrel, Tom Stainer, a judgment which he rightly deserved. The police caught him in Rayner Street, but he contrived to escape from them, and to flee to his own house, Treparen, where it would appear he hoped to get away by boat to some seaport town. But in his mad fear and haste he must have steered his frail craft badly, for his boat was seen by a coastguard to be drawn into the Devil's Pool, where it sank, never to be seen again.

Brian and Joyce were married soon after her release, and they are as happy as it is possible for mortals to be.

Their happiness was increased tenfold the other day when Joyce received a long letter from Australia telling her that Ralph Stainer and his wife are striving to lead new lives in a new world.

"I shall never forget your goodness to me," the letter ended, "and if I am ever a better woman it will be for your sake, and the sake of my baby in Paradise."

✻ ✻ *THE DISTANT HAVEN.* ✻ ✻

BY CLIFTON BINGHAM:

*O'er the lonely world of waters,
Day and night they come and go;
White-winged ships with treasure laden,
Ever passing to and fro.
Storm and tempest wild beset them,
Dark the weary waters roll,
But the stars of Heaven guide them
Ever onward to their goal!
Great and small, the voyage over,
When the journey long is past,
Each one has its distant haven
Where it will be home at last!*

*We are ships that voyage ever,
O'er that mightier ocean, Life;
Storms betide us, sorrows meet us,
Dark the night and wild the strife;
Toil and care and disappointment
Fret the heart and vex the soul,
But the stars that shine above us
Guide us to Life's brighter goal!
For we know, though long the journey,
And the sky oft overcast,
We, too, have our distant haven,
We shall be at home at last!*

Half-Minute Stories.

The Brightest and Best Little Stories of all Times.

A good joke is always worth re-telling, however often it may have been the rounds. Besides, the jokes that are familiar to you perhaps are unfamiliar to your friends, and vice-versa. In these pages we print a splendid selection of humorous stories, and though many are of recent origin, we do not claim that for all. Readers are invited to contribute to this feature, and should send anecdotes to "Half-Minute Stories," THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Where the stories are not original their source must be stated.

"BARKIS IS WILLIN'."

A DELIGHTFUL story is told by Miss Maude Adams, the American actress, of a coloured couple with whom she was formerly acquainted.

Pete had become ensnared by the charms of Miss Johnson, but being of a bashful turn of mind, he felt incapable of making a personal declaration of his passion, and was, therefore, constrained to do so through the medium of the telephone.

Accordingly he rang her up, and the following dialogue ensued :

"Is dat you, Miss Johnson?"

"Yaas."

"Well, Miss Johnson, I'se got a mos' important question to ask you."

"Yaas."

"Will you marry me, Miss Johnson?"

"Yaas. Who is it, please?" was Miss Johnson's prompt reply.



THE WORK SUITED HIM.

A YORKSHIRE nobleman once insisted on his head gardener taking as an apprentice a young lad in whom he was interested. The lad was very lazy, and the gardener was not at all pleased at having such a youth thrust upon him. Some time after, his lordship, walking in the garden, came upon his gardener, and said :

"Well, John, how is my young friend getting on with you?"

"Oh, he's doin' fine," replied the gardener with a smile, "he's working away there at the very job that suits him."

"I am glad to hear that," said his lordship. "What may the job be?"

"Chasing snails off the walks," was the cutting reply.

NO PROXIES ALLOWED.

A JUDGE had been facing a jury for two hours or so, and was just congratulating himself that the case was about over, when he suddenly discovered that but eleven jurors were present.

"How is this?" he said in surprise.

"Where is the twelfth man?"

"Please, sir," said the foreman, "he had to go away on business, but he left his verdict with me."

One can imagine the feelings of the judge, who was obliged to give orders for a re-trial of the case. The evidence had to be gone over again when the truant juror was put back in his place.



A COURT STORY.

THE naïve remark of a charming foreigner has caused King Edward considerable amusement.

The story goes that the lady in question impressed his Majesty so favourably with her loveliness, that he asked her to be his partner at bridge.

"But, sir," she said, "I really don't know how to play."

The King was firm, however, and would take no refusal.

"I assure you, sir," she protested in some embarrassment, "I could not think of playing. I don't know the difference between a king and a knave."

There was a ghastly pause, and when the lovely stranger realised what she had said, she was naturally covered with confusion. His Majesty, however, with his usual tact, laughed it off, and now tells the story with the utmost zest.

BADLY BITTEN.

A BURGLAR was one night engaged in the pleasing occupation of stowing a good haul of swag in his bag, when he was startled by a touch upon his shoulder, and, turning his head, he beheld a venerable, mild-eyed clergyman gazing sadly at him.

"Oh, my brother," groaned the reverend gentleman, "wouldst thou rob me? Turn, I beseech thee; turn from thy evil ways. Return those stolen goods and depart in peace, for I am merciful and forgive. Begone!"

And the burglar, only too thankful at not being given into custody of the police, obeyed, and slunk swiftly off.

Then the good old man carefully and quietly packed the swag into another bag, walked softly (so as not to disturb the slumber of the inmates) out of the house and away into the silent night. For he, too, was a burglar.

A NEAT EXCUSE.

THE Colonel of a certain regiment, who was very strict on his young officers, was continually inspecting their rooms to see if everything were tidy, and also to see if he could find fault with anything. One day he inspected the room of an officer who was noted for his wit. He had nearly finished his inspection when he noticed a cobweb in one of the corners, and thought to himself: "Now I have got him."

"What does this mean?" asked the Colonel.

The young officer coolly replied:

"We always keep one in case a man cuts his finger!"

CHEAP GAS.

At an exhibition of gas appliances a well-known firm of gas-meter manufacturers was showing a penny-in-the-slot meter, the front and sides of which consisted of plate glass to enable visitors to see the works.

The agent was provided with a key to unlock the meter, and take out the pennies, which he then used over again.

A dear old lady who had been watching him for some time was heard to remark:

"Lor', that's a cheap way of buyin' gas. A shillingsworth o' coppers 'ud last a lifetime. I must have one o' them fixed in my place."

THE DUKE'S FORGETFULNESS.

THE Duke of Devonshire occasionally suffers from absent-mindedness.

His Grace was visiting the English section of the last Paris Exhibition. He halted, with a friend, before a superb porphyry table that was one of the loan exhibits.

"What a splendid thing!" he said: "I envy the man who owns this."

His friend consulted the catalogue, and then handed it to the Duke with a smile. The entry stated that the table in question came from Chatsworth House, and was lent by the Duke of Devonshire.

AT THE WRONG PLACE.

"Yes, doctor," remarked the agitated young woman in the doctor's office, "the dear little thing seems to be teething, and he moans and whimpers so pitifully, and really I don't know what to do."

"How old?" inquired the medical man:

"He's just three weeks and——"

"Good gracious!" remarked the physician. "That's pretty young for teething to begin!"

"Yes," she continued, "and the poor little thing's hair is coming out so dreadfully, and——"

"Hair coming out?" exclaimed the doctor. "My dear madam, are you quite certain that——"

"And he won't even touch the milk I give him in his little saucer, but——"

"Madam, you give a three-weeks-old child milk in a saucer?"

"And he does nothing but race from one room to another, and jump up on the coverlet of the best bed, and——"

"Three weeks old, and racing from one room to another, and jumping on beds?"

"And he's so terribly anxious to chew things—to sharpen his poor little toofoems, I suppose—that he has eaten up two of my hats and a pair of Jack's slippers, and four palm-leaf fans, and the leather bindings of two volumes of Macaulay's 'History of England,' and——"

"Oh!" exclaimed the medical man, a light breaking in upon him. "Madam, my time is very limited. I am very busy. Moreover, homeopathy has not yet advanced sufficiently far to render its practitioners capable of diagnosing the teething difficulties of fox-terriers! There's a veterinary surgeon in the next street, four doors to the right. Good-morning, madam."

A TURN IN FORTUNE.

QUITE a romance attends the founding of the great fortune which Mr. J. B. Robinson, the South African magnate, has made for himself.

At the time he went to the Rand no one believed in the existence of gold in what are now known as deep levels. Mr. Robinson, however, thought otherwise, and started to dig at Langlaagte.

"Digging a hole nowhere for nothin'," was the verdict the miners passed on the venture, and so it really seemed, for no reef was struck. Bankruptcy stared him in the face.

In part payment and to encourage them, he gave his workmen a few shares apiece in the enterprise. One day he went to the mine as usual, and found no one there. A reef had been struck at some depth that morning. It was thin and absolutely worthless, so the miners had rushed off to Johannesburg to sell their shares before the news got about.

Mr. Robinson felt that he was ruined; then it occurred to him that as he had dug so far he might as well go a bit further. Work was therefore recommenced, and in a few days a rich reef was struck.

The miners dropped their tools in a hurry and bolted to Johannesburg for the second time—but their errand now was to buy back their shares before the good news leaked out.



WHY IT RAINS.

SMALL BOY (inquiringly): "Papa, what makes it rain more in the night than the day?"

Papa (learnedly): "My child, you have no doubt heard that two clouds colliding cause the moisture to descend in the shape of rain?"

Boy (eagerly): "Oh, now I see why there is more rain at night. Of course, they can't see where they're going in the dark."



NOT THE SAME THING.

At the time when Canon Hensley Henson was appointed to his Westminster Canonry two ladies were discussing his merits, and one remarked to the other:

"My dear, it's too bad. Do you know his father was Lord Salisbury's coachman?"

The truth was that Canon Henson's father was at one time Lord Salisbury's coach.

NOT A LOAFER.

Not long ago a lady living in Reading engaged a new servant, and having views on the question of "followers," on the girl's arrival she expressed them.

"Mind you, Jane," she said seriously, "I will have no loafers about the place. You quite understand?"

"Yes, mum," was the reply.

Within the short period of a week, however, the lady had grounds for suspecting that her orders had been disobeyed, and Jane was promptly interrogated.

"Did I not make it a stipulation of your engagement that no followers were to be allowed?"

"No, mum, you said loafers."

"Well, you may have it that way if you wish. You were talking to a man for ten minutes at the area gate last night."

"Yes, mum, that's my chap," said Jane unblushingly.

"How dare you disobey my express orders in this way?"

"I ain't disobeyed 'em, mum," persisted Jane. "George—that's my young man—is a baker, sure enough, but 'e ain't a loafer. He's a biscuit hand, he is."



COOL CHEEK!

It was a newly-opened shop, and the window was resplendent with neckties and cravats of glorious brilliancy. Confidently they announced in gilt letters: "Any article removed from the window." So when Smithson walked in and requested to see that "bright pink and green shot with peacock blue in the front row," the polite salesman disarranged the front, and after some considerable trouble, brought out the desired object.

"Rather loud, isn't it?" remarked Smithson.

The affable salesman agreed.

"Certainly, it is striking."

"I thought so. You needn't put it back."

"Very well, sir," and the man began to wrap up the tie. "Anything else to-day, sir?"

"Oh, I don't want it," said Smithson, "only you know you advertise: 'Any article removed from the window,' and as this hideous thing offends my æsthetic taste, I thought I'd ask you to remove it, that's all. Good-day."

Then that salesman philosophised audibly and with much fervour.

CABBY'S REVENGE.

A STIPENDIARY magistrate in a town in Yorkshire, who was not given to err on the side of leniency, once had before him a cab-driver who was charged with furious driving. After some severe comments on the man's conduct, a heavy fine was imposed.

A few days after the trial the magistrate, who had been detained rather longer than usual in the court, was hurrying to catch his train, when, seeing an empty cab handy, he hailed the driver and directed him to proceed to the station, telling him that he was pressed for time. The driver, however, heedless of the hint, kept to a very slow trot.

"I say, I say, my man," exclaimed the fare, with his head out of the window, "drive faster than this."

"It can't be done, sir," replied the driver. "Ye see, if we drives faster, we're had afore the beak, and we gets fined, so we has to be careful."

He did not alter his pace, and neither did the "beak" catch his train.



HONESTY ILLUSTRATED.

MR. COLES, the prosperous coal-dealer, called one of his oldest carters into the office the other morning and tendered him a large sum of money.

"What's this for?" asked the driver.

"Merely a token of appreciation for services rendered," replied Mr. Coles.

"But you've always paid me well, and that was appreciation enough."

"There is more than that in it, John," continued Mr. Coles. "I honestly owe you this money."

"I can't see what for."

"Let me tell you," and he dropped his voice to a whisper. "You have been with me for eighteen years, working 300 days every year, and averaging three loads a day; that makes 16,200 loads. You weigh 160 pounds, John, and we have never missed weighing you with every load; that makes 2,592,000 pounds, or 1,157 tons. This, at an average of 15s. per ton, represents £867 15s. The packet you hold in your hand contains £86 15s. 6d., or 10 per cent., which we think is yours by right. We are honest men, John, and don't wish to defraud anybody out of what is rightly his."

John bowed in humble submission, and he is now waiting in anticipation of the next dividend.

AMUSING EPITAPHS.

IN olden days the inscriptions on tombstones often took a humorous form, as the following prove:

From a stone in Abingdon Churchyard, raised to the memory of a famous local cricketer:

Tread gently, stranger, 'neath this mound
The bones of Enoch Wood are laid,
Hard by the village cricket ground
Whereon in life he often played.
How oft in vain the bowlers sought
To bring an end to Enoch's stay!
How oft his curly ones have brought
To other batsmen dire dismay!
Alas! no more he'll make a score,
For, faced by that grim bowler, Gout,
He chanced to get his Leg before,
And Death, the umpire, gave him "Out."
His game of life is played and won,
An honest man—brave, gentle, sage,
He'll hear the Victor's meed: "Well done!"
When God works out his average.

From a stone in Wolverhampton Churchyard:

Here lie the bones
Of Joseph Jones,
Who ate whilst he was able;
But once o'erfed
He dropped down dead
And fell beneath the table.
When from his tomb
To meet his doom
He rises amidst sinners,
Since he must dwell
In Heaven or—,
Take him—which gives best dinners.

From a stone in a churchyard in the Potteries:

Beneath this stone lies Catherine Gray,
Changed to a lifeless lump of clay.
By earth and clay she got her pelf,
And now she's turned to clay herself. . . .
Who knows but in a course of years,
In some tall pitcher or brown pan,
She in her shop may stand again?

From Woolwich Churchyard, over the grave of a soldier:

Sacred to the memory of Major James Brush, Royal Artillery, who was killed by the accidental discharge of a pistol by his orderly, 14th April, 1831.—Well done, good and faithful servant.

From St. Pancras Churchyard, London:

Here lies one, believe it if you can,
Who, tho' an attorney, was an honest man;
The gates of Heaven for him will open wide,
But will be shut 'gainst all the tribe beside.

I shall be glad to receive from my readers other examples of humorous epitaphs, which in every case must be authenticated. Payment will be made for those published. Send your contributions to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "Epitaph" in the top left-hand corner, to arrive not later than September 4th.

Here are the best of the anecdotes received in the recent competition for stories of harmless revenges.

CURING A JOKER.

A PRACTICAL joker tells this story, and declares that the experience cured him of his bad habits.

"On my arrival at Liverpool, as a joke I sent to a friend of mine in the country, well-known for his aversion to spending money, a telegram, with portage to pay, reading: 'I am perfectly well.'"

"The information evidently was gratifying to him, for about a week after sending the telegram a package was delivered at my room, on which I paid four shillings for carriage.

"Upon opening the package I found a large paving-stone, on which was pasted a card, saying: 'This is the weight your recent telegram lifted from my mind.'"



A RARE STAMP.

ONE night, in the school dormitory, when Jones was nearly asleep, his chum Smith stood by the bedside, and said:

"Would you like a bite of apple, old man?"

Jones did not bother to open his eyes. He just opened his mouth very wide, and bit as hard as he could. The "apple" happened to be a ball of scented soap, and the memory of that bite lingered long.

Some days after, during recess, Jones observed that Smith was busy with his stamp collection, so he went up to him, saying:

"I've a rare stamp for you, Smith—a real good'un, which I'll give you!"

With that he came down with his foot, "like a cart-load of bricks," on the other's toe.

"Revenge is sweet!" he said, as he made for the door—and safety.



THE DOCTOR'S REVENGE.

A VERY famous artist had a dog, of which he was very fond. One day the animal fell ill, and the artist, thinking that a veterinary surgeon was hardly good enough to doctor it, sent for a well-known medical man, who was not at all pleased when he discovered why he had been called.

On his return home he wrote a note to the artist, as follows:—

Dr. X. wishes to have his drawing-room shutters repainted, and will be glad if Mr. W. will call about the job as soon as possible.

HAIR AND CONSCIENCE.

A MAGISTRATE who was bald was hearing a case, and at its conclusion said to the prisoner:

"If what the witnesses have said against you is true, your conscience must be as black as your hair."

"If the hair of a man indicates the state of his conscience," retorted the prisoner, "it appears to me that you cannot have any conscience at all!"



TESTING THE COINS.

A GENTLEMAN entered a railway station, and going to the booking-office, asked for a ticket to a certain town, at the same time putting down a sovereign.

The booking-clerk took up the coin, and after the usual banging of it on the desk, tendered the gentleman his ticket and change.

The gentleman took up his ticket, and then calmly banged each coin of his change (three half-crowns, two florins, and some coppers) on the desk, much to the confusion of the clerk and the amusement of the people standing by.



A LESSON IN MANNERS.

IN a certain Kentish town many years ago there was a post-master who had grown old and important in the office (the latter anyway in his own estimation).

One evening a tradesman called to get a shillingworth of stamps, and, having brought the letters with him which he wanted to post, started to place the stamps on the envelopes at the counter.

The post-master, in a nasty tone of voice, told him the counter was for the sale of stamps, not for the convenience of customers.

The customer made up his mind to have his own back, so the next night he again went with a number of letters in his pockets, but only one in his hand.

Throwing a shilling on the counter he asked the post-master for a stamp, which he received with his change; he stuck the stamp on the envelope and immediately took out another letter and called for another stamp, this time tendering a half-crown; and so he went on calling for a single stamp and making the post-master serve him and give him the change until Mr. Post-master got thoroughly annoyed and tired.

Mr. Halliwell Sutcliffe, whose romantic stories are so popular, finds it hard to give a reason for selecting "*A Midnight Bridal*" as his best; however, what he says on the subject will be read with interest:

"No author, I think, can separate his critical faculty from his prepossessions when dealing with a story he has written himself. While he is writing the tale, his critical faculty has full play; but when he looks back on it—a thing finished, complete, so far as he is concerned—his own liking for the characters, for the period, for the colour and motion of the story, interferes with critical judgment of it. In brief, I think '*A Midnight Bridal*' my best short story—well, just because I think it my best."

A Midnight Bridal.

By HALLIWELL SUTCLIFFE.

MAURICE ST. QUAIN rode out from Edinburgh town—rode as a man rides on whom the world's cares sit lightly. Seen by the light of the moon, the stars, and the oil lamps that creaked fretfully the length of the Canongate, he showed a square, big-headed, well-knit fellow; and his clothes were London-made.

"Damme, what a night!" he muttered, as the keen wind blew through him and about. "For an east wind and a raw air, commend me to this same capital of Scotland."

He rode awhile in silence, then talked again to the slim-footed beast he rode, the while he patted her sleek mane.

"Yet the women are softer than their climate, eh, dear lass?" he muttered to the mare. "And if I love not Mistress Lang as well as I've loved others—well, she must serve to pass the time till I get marching orders from the sour old lord, my uncle."

The moon came forth more boldly, and showed the man's face in a clearer light. Deep lines there were about the eyes and mouth—lines chiseled by a life of pleasure, yet promising a brave and lightsome spirit under all.

Perhaps the moon knew—the moon, whose woman's curiosity has taught her such queer, prying habits at times when all true ladies are abed—perhaps the moon knew what there was of good and bad in Maurice St. Quain. He had loved lightly, and left sad hearts behind him; he had fought one duel at least in the course of each amour, and love and fight between them had marked him; yet withal he held a certain reverence for women in the abstract, which no women in the flesh had yet found power to wake.

And now he was journeying, under the light of this same moon that knew him, towards the village far away yonder at the foot of the low hills, where one he liked, and loved not, waited for him.

On toward Duddingstone village he rode, and was nearing the hither end, where Arthur's Seat frowns down upon the lake, when he saw a figure, bent and cloaked, step out into the moonlit road. A hand was laid upon his bridle, and at the moment a wild blast of wind swept back the cloak, revealing a woman's face, old, worn, and wrinkled beyond belief.

For a full moment she stood there, saying no word, but looking at his face, his wearing-gear, the appointments of his horse. Nor did he break the silence; this figure, coming from the dreary night, seemed rather a spirit's than a woman's; and time and place alike combined to overlay the man's undoubted courage.

"Ay, the Lord is guid," murmured the old woman at last. "Didna I pray for sic a callant to come riding under Arthur's Seat?"

"What is it, mother?" asked St. Quain, finding his voice again.

"I sent up many a prayer, an' ye have come."

St. Quain laughed—laughed as the Scots themselves are wont to do, with hardship and a sound of dryness in the throat. "'Tis the first time, to my knowledge, that I have come in answer to any woman's prayer, unless she chanced to be young and buxom. Come, mother, can I serve you? And if so, how? For time is pressing with me."

"An' isna time pressing wi' the bonnie bairn—the bit lassie I nursed on my ain

knee? There's a tryst for ye the nicht, an' ye'll no fail to keep it."

"A tryst? Why, yes; but how should you know of it?"

Again she eyed him for awhile in silence; then, "The hour is no just one for yon kind o' love," said she. "There's Death will be the groomsman if ye winna come wi' me."

Maurice St. Quain began to shiver, what with the wind that chilled his body and this queer speech that chilled his soul:

"What would you?" he said:

"Ye maun let me hold your bridle an' guide ye to the muckle house above the loch"—pointing a shriveled finger as she spoke at the moon-lighted wavelets of the lake below. "Ye maun ask naething as to aething, for there's little time, I'm thinking, if the lassie's to be kept from out a bridal shroud."

Slowly it was born in upon him that there was a life to be saved—a young girl's life. Not all the night wind could frost his chivalry; not all the love-trysts in the world could turn him from a clear errand of mercy such as this.

"I'll go with you," he said:

The woman clutched his bridle, muttered a blessing, so it seemed, and strode off along a grass-grown bridle-track with the step of one who had fewer years to carry. Down the loch they went, with a mist of spray in their faces; up the further side of the steep they journeyed, and in at a rude gateway. The moon shone fair upon a rugged, loose-built house, and from an upper chamber came the light of many candles.

"Get ye doon," murmured the old nurse. "I'll tak your beastie to the stable if ye'll bide a wee."

He waited, as if under orders from his Captain; and the wind shrilled about the walls; and the waters of the loch went lapping, lapping up the reedy beach:

"Come wi' me," the same voice murmured at his ear, while yet he was in the midst of wonder and of vague affright.

He followed her across the courtyard, and up a flight of steps, and into a great hall. And now, for the first time, he ventured to draw breath.

Without, there was the wind, the moon-light and the witchery; within, all seemed to have a usual air about it—the air of a house whose master is well-found in this world's goods. A man-servant was putting logs upon the great fire on the hearth-place; a hound, long-nosed, long-bodied, dozed beside the blaze; the very nurse herself,

who had shown as some weird creature of the night, grew to the likeness of a woman as she doffed her cloak. She crossed to the board that held the middle of the floor, and poured a goblet of wine, and brought it to the strangely-bidden guest:

"And ay, she's bonnie," she murmured, with a sort of hard encouragement. "Ye needna look as, if 'twere pain an' grief to save the lassie's life."

St. Quain gulped down his wine, and felt the red of it go tingling through the veins that had been cold till now. The old nurse watched him curiously, and something like a smile was on her face as she noted once again the big comeliness, the air of consequence, that hung about this Englishman.

"My lady waits ye, and the meenister," she said.

He could make nothing of it. Who was my lady? And the minister—surely he would not be here unless the maid were on the point of death; and if she were so near to death, what service could a stranger render her? The house, moreover, did not seem like one that entertained old Death as visitor; for serving men, with careless faces, free from any trace of woe, were moving in and out of the grim hall, making ready against supper-time. Again, what did it mean? he asked himself.

"Perchance there is a supper-party," he said, with sudden inspiration, "and a guest has failed you?"

The old nurse was plucking at his sleeve impatiently. "There'll be one guest o' the twa come into the hall the nicht," she muttered. "One o' the twa—and the other's Death, I'm telling ye."

"Oh, ay. You would be thirteen at the table, and you sought one more to break the ill-luck."

"I ken little o' your English haverings: Thirteen? Why for no should thirteen sit down to meat? Come ye wi' me, laddie, for its ower near the strike o' twelve to stand here talking o' matters that only a Scot may ken."

He followed her, with quickened breath. They mounted a broad stair of oak, and crossed a landing hung round about with trophies of the chase and battlefield. The old nurse pointed to a rusty pike, and chuckled grimly.

"That came fro' Bannockburn," she said; "and now it seems we have to beg fro' an English callant what once we took. I could weel wish ye'd been cradled north o' the Border, but 'tis as God wills."

St. Quain smiled quietly at the race-hatred which slumbered still—not knowing that this same race-hatred was to wear a graver aspect for him soon.

The nurse flung open a door on the right-hand, and St. Quain found himself in a well-lighted parlour. A spinet stood at the far end, and round the hearth was grouped a company of three. The first, a lean grey-beard, habited in black, was talking to a stately matron; the third member of the group sat on the other side of the hearth, and twined and untwined her white fingers restlessly.

All the gallantry in Maurice St. Quain, all the tenderness and passion, came headlong to the front as he looked at that third figure.

He had thought till now that beauty was far to seek in Scotland; but now he learnt the lesson that many men had conned before his time. There was witchery in that pale face and figure; he had known no other like her, though he had wandered through many countries with an eye wide open for such matters.

The old nurse could have taught him words with which to clothe his thoughts, had she been minded—soft Scottish words that Southrons have no knowledge of. But the nurse was glancing at him eagerly; and from her look it seemed that life and death hung in the balance.

As for St. Quain, he stood and bowed above his trim, three-cornered hat, and felt the eeriness steal back upon him. Without, the wind howled unwearied, and light spits of rain came tapping like so many fingers at the windows; within, he saw four people—strangers until now—all eyeing him with a regard half-eager, half-mistrustful.

"My prayer went bonnily, my lady," the old nurse said. "I met him on the way 'twixt this an' Duddingstone, an', tho' he's Southron, he's no that ill to look at."

The elder lady checked her. "Your errand here must seem a strange one, sir," she said. "It will seem stranger when you hear the nature of it."

He scarcely heard her; for his glance was on the lassie seated at the far side of the hearth, and he was thinking how gladly he would have journeyed half through England to win a sight of her. And she, for her part, was regarding him with a look he could not understand; a warm colour, as of pleasure, had risen to her face, and it seemed not possible that she should be the victim of a fatal malady.

"Your name, sir, is——?" went on my lady.

"St. Quain, at your service."

"A gentleman of quality, if I mistake not?"

"Nephew to Lord St. Quain," he answered drily. This cool, quiet questioning, as if he were a malefactor in the dock, was little to his taste; better, he thought, the wildness and glamour of the scene without.

"Then, sir, I must ask your patience, while I tell you how it comes that we entertain a guest so unexpected and so welcome," she added, with a cold politeness that was almost insolence.

She motioned him to be seated, but he would not. He felt a strange antipathy towards this lady who craved a favour and received it as if the world were made to do her service. And yet, as he looked at the lassie once again—and found her eyes still resting on him, with their pitiful, half-pleading look—he could not nurse his anger.

"We are the Lockerbies of Loch," went on my lady, with the air of one who has said enough to compel both homage and surprise.

St. Quain, indeed, felt no little surprise, for the Lockerbies were famed for their poverty, their pride, and the beauty of the women. He understood now my lady's bearing, and resented it not at all; for no Lockerbie that he had heard or read of had thought to find his equal.

"I am honoured by any summons from Lady Lockerbie," he said.

My lady glanced shrewdly at him; it seemed she liked his quick address, and the fashion of his face and figure.

"There is a curse upon our house," she went on.

"I have heard of it."

"Who has not? You know the danger, then, that overhangs our daughters?"

In a flash he saw the meaning of it all; and his first sense was one of wonder that an old superstition could die so hard. Was it not the year of grace 1750? And could it be that four folk gathered here together—one a minister, the others women of pluck and sense—were following this Jack-o'-Lantern legend with implicit faith? He caught the minister's eye, and the man of prayer began to shift his feet uneasily.

"Such matters are idle—snares of Belial," he said; "yet the curse has never failed through three long centuries."

"Legend and history bear out your tale, sir," said St. Quain, and he paused in doubt.

The pause was broken by a sudden eager cry from the lassie who was the head and fount of all this trouble.

"It is idle, sir," she said, with a swift glance at St. Quain. "Scots lassies do not die of legends, and so I tell them."

Yet under her gaiety, too, there was a note of fear. And under her gaiety, likewise, there was something that told St. Quain the truth he hungered for. Mystery or no—hasty wedlock or no—it was plain that in her very denial of the need there was a confession that he himself was something to her.

My lady came and laid a hand on the girl's shoulder; and all her pride was gone. "Janet," she said tenderly, "I have but you, and the curse is stronger than we are."

"But, mother, you are asking"—the colour swept across her face and left it pale again—"you are asking this gentleman to— to give his life for mine."

"What folly, child!"

"He will be bound to me—to me, whom he did not know a half hour since. What will his life be worth to him afterwards?"

It was St. Quain who spoke now. "My life will be worth little to me if I lose you."

And the old nurse, standing in the shadows, rubbed her lean hands together joyfully. Southron or no, he spoke as women like to hear a lover speak.

There was an awkward silence, broken on the sudden by a deep whirr from the eight-day clock that stood beside the hearth. All turned to the dial-face; all listened while the ten strokes were struck, sonorous and deliberate. The girl herself began to tremble, for the legends of her race were strong on her, and two more hours might see her wedded to a grimmer bridegroom than St. Quain.

"Haste ye, haste ye," crooned the old nurse. "It's gey ill to play wi' time as ye are doing."

The minister was grey of face, and now and then he muttered a prayer. And then there came a wailing from without, as if in answer to the deep voice of the clock—a wailing that drifted round the courtyard, and down the slope, and across the lapping waters of the loch.

"Cannot ye hear?" the old nurse cried.

"It is the wind—the wind, woman," said the minister fretfully.

"Oh, an' it's the wind, say ye? Well, I've heard it twice in a long life, an' I dinna like its voice." She looked at her young

mistress. "For the love of Heaven, dearie, save yourself," she said.

St. Quain could scarce remember afterwards what chanced. He was aware of wind and rain against the window-panes, of the loud ticking of the clock, of Janet's hand in his. He recalled vaguely that the minister had talked and prayed above them, and that his heart beat high as he named the girl his wife. But what he did remember in after years was the great sob of relief that came from Lady Lockerbie; it was plain that she looked on her daughter as one returned almost from the grave. Nor was this faith in an old legend so strange as at another hour and place it might have shown. This house by the lone loch was one that harboured ghosts, if ever a house did, and legends might well find lodging-place in every cranny of the walls.

When next he felt himself awake, Lady Lockerbie's voice was in his ears; and the pride, that was almost insult, had come back to it.

"We owe you more of explanation than we have given," she said, taking him aside. "Why, you will ask, knowing as we did the danger that hung over us, why did we leave all to the chance of the last moment?"

St. Quain's air was strangely dignified. "I ask for no explanations," he said. "I have won your daughter, and I count it the happiest evening of my life."

"Yet you will wonder by-and-by, and I must tell you. My daughter was to have been married this morning to an old lover of hers; everything was in readiness, and he—he was killed in a duel yesternight. The news reached us at daybreak, and we have spent the day in fear so horrible that you could not credit it."

"There was a Fate in it," said St. Quain—and, indeed, he felt as much; "and if I bring your daughter one-half the happiness I have won—"

"Our pride must suffer," put in my lady; "the Lockerbies have never yet needed to go abroad in search of an alliance—to seek it in the public road. I fear, sir, your thoughts of us must be something of the strangest."

He bit his lip, then smothered down his own sense of pride. "My thoughts towards you are of gratitude," he said—"and surely the St. Quains are not of such indifferent blood—"

"In England the name is a good one, so I believe. Yet our pride is wounded, sir, to have hurried you into a bridal in this fashion. And yet, again, we owe you

gratitude. Pray lead my daughter to the hall; there is supper waiting for us there."

Plain as was my lady's attitude—of gratitude all chilled by Scottish pride—her daughter's was different altogether. Half-shy she was, not knowing how this trim-built gallant felt towards her; but the pressure of her hand upon his arm was friendly, warm, confiding almost.

"I shall love wild nights henceforward," he whispered in her ear. "The wind and the rain have brought me—you!"

It seemed that she had suffered from deep feeling long repressed; for on the sudden she looked him in the face, and let a dangerous light come into her grey eyes. "I was to have married Bruce of Muirtown," she murmured, "and, oh, how I hated him. Better have died, I think, than go through life with him."

St. Quain laughed low and happily. "And I?" he said. "Am I a better mate than Death?"

"You saved my life, and you saved me from Bruce of Muirtown. Am I like to forget such services?"

They were in the hall by this time, and the minister was bowing Lady Lockerbie into her chair. Very handsome my lady looked, and chill as the night wind that raved about the house; and she glanced at St. Quain with a curious distaste. Not that he cared for all my lady's coldness; the girl beside him was his wife, and he had known no other like her in the world. This supper-party might, indeed, have dashed a bridegroom's spirits, had he been made of softer stuff; the wildness of the night, the urgency, the curse that seemed to be on the wind's lips as it hurried by—they were no usual beginning of a bridal trip. Yet St. Quain filled his glass and drank a measure—pledging his lady with his eyes—as gaily as if all were orderly and well-omened.

"Why should such a destiny as ours hang over us?" the girl murmured. The fear, suspense, and shame that she had undergone lay heavy still upon her, and she shivered as she spoke.

"The legend says, if I remember rightly, it was because some long-dead Lockerbie did bitter wrong to his neighbour's daughter."

"You know our story well, it seems."

"I have lived much in Scotland, and its tales are dear to me."

"Yet where is the justice of it? All this was centuries ago, and I——"

"And you have pride and all the other

legacies to bear. He did grievous wrong to this girl, did he not—your ancestor? And she drowned herself upon her eighteenth birthday; and the mother came to him as he sat in the hall, and cursed him, saying that no maid of his should pass her eighteenth year."

She nodded, gravely, and turned to shudder at the wind-beats that rocked the very walls. "And we have escaped—all but two of our race—by making maidens wives before they reached the fatal age."

"And I have reason only to bless the old-time story. Why, Scotland never saw bride so bonnie as mine; and one day—when, Janet?—she may learn to love me."

"I am to be taught—and the master, so it seems, is clever at his work," she murmured. My Lady Lockerbie frowned at them from her seat at the table-head.

"Mr. St. Quain," she said, in measured tones, "I must offer you a lodging for the night. To-morrow, if it suits you, I should wish you to ride into England, to warn your friends of this alliance, and to make all preparations for a second marriage in due form."

St. Quain laughed outright. The wine and the witchery and the sweetness of it all had got into his blood. "I ask for no second marriage," he said. "Happiness is happiness—and I have found it here to-night."

The minister looked soberly over his glass of wine. He was oppressed by the irregularity of it all, and by the bridegroom's levity. And Lady Lockerbie looked coldly at her son-in-law.

"I think," she said, "that happiness has very little to do with this matter. We are an old race, sir—indeed, you come of an old race yourself, so far as England goes—and I should wish to treat with your father as to settlements, and——"

St. Quain felt a dull pain at his heart. He had loved his father well. "My father died," he said gravely, "four years ago—at Culloden."

Had he unsheathed his sword at the supper-table, the effect of this quiet speech could not have been more dire.

"Died at Culloden?" echoed Lady Lockerbie, clutching the table with restless fingers. "On which side, sir, did he fight?"

"Why, for the King."

"The King? Which King—our own Stuart, or the Usurper?"

"For King George. We have been loyal subjects always."

The minister began to mutter vaguely to himself. He knew not what might follow this rash confession of St. Quain's.

"*Loyalty*, sir?" cried my lady, in a voice of bitter scorn. "We Lockerbies do not play with words, as you would seem to do. I lost my husband at Culloden—and your father fought against him, so it seems."

"I can but regret," said St. Quain slowly. "Yet it would be a poor thing surely for the children to cherish enmity because the fathers were brave men and fought for different causes."

"It takes all rights from you so far as my daughter is concerned."

St. Quain felt the girl on his left hand move closer to him, with a sort of instinctive denial.

"You have saved her life, sir," went on my lady, in the same cold, even tones; "you have done us a service, and we thank you for it—but you must never have speech or sight of her again."

It was St. Quain's turn now. He rose to his full height, and Janet, looking up at him, could not keep back that glow of pride and tenderness which had swept over her at his first coming.

"Lady Lockerbie," he said, "I have won my wife, and I shall take her home with me as soon as she has made her preparations. I care little for King George or Charlie Stuart—but I love *her* as I never thought that a man could love a woman."

"You do not understand," put in my lady. "Culloden was worse than Flodden even; the memory of it is with us day and night. We *hate* you English folk."

"Janet," said St. Quain, and he laughed as he turned to the girl—"Janet, what say you? Granted I was unhappy in my English birth—and, faith, I had little choice about the matter!—are you willing to fare out with me and trust to my sword-arm and my honour?"

The Lockerbie pride took diverse forms, and my lady had no exclusive share in it. The girl rose, too, and put a warm hand into her lover's. "I will go with you," she said, "and—I shall go fearlessly."

Again there was a troubled silence, broken this time by a rattling at the door.

"The wind, my lady," murmured the grey minister.

"Open, open!" came a shout from the other side of the door.

"God help us, 'tis Bruce's voice!" murmured Lady Lockerbie: "Bruce, that we thought was dead!"

"The night is full of the wee bit ghosties," murmured the old nurse, standing behind her lady's chair. "He, too, I'm thinking, couldna rest quiet i' his bed while the English-born stepped into his dead shoon."

Again the girl moved nearer to St. Quain, and slipped her hand into his own under cover of the board. "It is Bruce's voice," she whispered. "Bruce of Muirtown, and I fear him so!"

"Fear him, with me beside you?"

"Yes, for he has loved me since I was a child. Oh, he's not bad, not bad at all! But he is fierce, and I do not love him, and—and I would this trouble had not been brought on you."

St. Quain's heart leapt high. Her last thought was for him, despite her own dread of Bruce; the pressure of her hand was sure and wifely.

"See, child," he whispered, "do you love me? May I act as if you were my wife in truth as well as in the letter?"

The pressure of her hand alone replied; and then the sound of knocking at the door grew louder, unmistakable. The old nurse went to open, and let in a storm of wind and rain that half-blinded those within. And when at last their eyes grew clearer, they saw a big fellow, with blue eyes and rain-wet hair of yellow, standing, like a storm-sprite, his eyes fixed upon my lady's daughter.

"I feared to be too late," he cried. "It wants but an hour of midnight, and——"

He paused, and clutched his heart as if in pain. And now they noticed that his left arm was bandaged, and that a kerchief was wrapped about his brow.

"They—they said that you were dead," my lady stammered. "Say, Bruce of Muirtown, it's your ghost?"

"My ghost?" he echoed. "Nay, but 'twas like to be. I was wounded, and I fell into a sort of trance, through loss of blood; and when I woke there was a voice that called to me. 'Rise, rise!' it said. 'Tis a race between the bridegroom Death and thee.' And I rode hither through the storm."

A sudden pity fell upon them: His eyes dwelt hungrily upon the girl, and it was clear that only love of her had given him strength to ride so far.

"She is married already," whispered my lady.

He looked more like a fiend than any fleshly man, as he paused to understand his misery. "Married? To whom?" he thundered.

St. Quain bowed quietly. "To me, sir, an hour ago," he said.

Bruce of Muirtown began to mutter like a man deranged; then asked the minister if this were true.

"They are fast as the kirk can make them," said the grey man of peace.

Again there was a silence; then Bruce laughed harshly, and lifted a goblet of wine, and flung the contents full in his rival's face:

"We'll fight upon it, sir, and she shall be a widow before to-morrow breaks."

St. Quain felt a rush of shame come over him—shame, not for his wine-stained face, but for the weakness of this man who had challenged him to combat:

"I regret, sir," he stammered, wiping his cheeks and brow, "that you are only strong enough to offer insult—not to atone for it."

Bruce of Muirtown turned his hungry eyes away—turned them from the lass he worshipped, and let them rest upon St. Quain:

"I am recovered," he said, with a heaviness of voice that belied him; "I will fight you in the meadows by the loch to-night."

"Nay, for I refuse," St. Quain answered quietly. "I do not fight with wounded men."

Janet, for her part, wondered at his self-command; for already she had grown to love him, and no love-ridden woman doubts her lover's courage. But Lady Lockerbie was of different mould, and her voice was cold as the raving wind without when she turned towards St. Quain:

"In Scotland, sir, *men* answer insult with the sword," she said:

St. Quain drew back, with something near to horror. For the first time he understood this woman—understood the depth of her prejudice and her pride. She had been glad to save her daughter's life; she was more glad to think that Bruce of Muirtown had returned, to cut the bridal-knot with one sharp stroke of the sword:

And yet the man was weak through loss of blood and long riding under rough skies. How could he fight with him?

"'Tis not the first time we have daunted Englishmen," said Bruce, with a mocking laugh. "See how he pales beneath the wine-stains—and all because he sees a hand go down towards a sword-hilt."

St. Quain was mortal, though brave and tender-hearted. "You fasten a quarrel on me," he said. "Well and good—but ladies should know nothing of it."

"Ay, ay, they should, seeing that one of the ladies is my promised wife. And, gad,

sir," he added, in a white heat of passion, "if you dally further, I'll thrash you in their presence."

St. Quain could do no more. He lifted his wife's hand and kissed it; he bowed, as a courtier might have done, to Lady Lockerbie: "I am ready, sir, and the moon is full to-night," he said:

The black-robed minister stepped forward:

"Gentlemen, gentlemen——," he began.

"It is too late," said Bruce of Muirtown.

"Too late," echoed St. Quain, turning as he left the hall, to find his wife's eyes fixed on his, with a tenderness in them beyond belief:

"Yet think, sir," said the minister, his hand on St. Quain's arm: "A duel is at all times a godless enterprise; but when your adversary is sick——"

"True," said St. Quain quietly. "In England we do not fight with such as Mr. Bruce here, but it seems that in Scotland the matter shows far otherwise."

"In Scotland men fight for a right cause, whether they be sick or well," said Lady Lockerbie sharply.

St. Quain bowed low to her. He was beginning to understand how pride—Scottish pride—may oust all womanhood:

"You will fight?" said Bruce of Muirtown eagerly, as he gulped down a measure of red wine.

"You leave me no option, sir," answered St. Quain.

Together they went out into the windy night, he and the man whose left hand rested in a sling; and even now, amid the stress of weather and of feeling, he wondered that the prospect of sword-play could be so bracing to a wounded man.

"There will be none to watch us," muttered Bruce. "The minister is pledged to peace, and we can scarcely ask the women-folk to act as seconds."

"Where is the ground?" said St. Quain:

"Rather, what is your weapon? You are the challenged party."

"Swords," said the other, after a scarce perceptible pause.

The clouds had left the moon by this time, and the wind was dying into fitful moans and gusts as they went out into the grim courtyard and forward to the meadowlands beyond. From time to time Bruce halted in his walk, but always recovered and went forward with an air so hard and desperate that St. Quain felt chilled and awestruck: He could love and hate, this thwarted lover, and spared himself as little, so it seemed, as

he spared man or woman when his heart was set upon a matter.

They marked their ground, and once again St. Quain drew back.

"You are ill, sir, and I am ashamed," he said. "Will you not wait awhile, and send your friend to me in proper form?"

"And let you snatch *my wife* from me? I think not, sir. Either you fight me now, or I have you kicked into the highroad by the serving-men."

St. Quain drew his sword. "I am ready," he said, in a voice as hard as Bruce's own.

His enemy's attack was overwhelming at the first; Bruce, it was plain, distrusted his own staying-power, and his onslaught, like himself, was rash, impetuous, regardless of all laws. St. Quain, recovering after the first surprise, played a quiet, watchful blade; he made no effort of any sort to thrust, but parried each wild stroke with a studied ease that brought the other's blood to fever pitch.

Time after time Bruce strove to beat the other down; and then a mist came before his eyes; and after that he felt his sword go up, and up, and up, towards the blue-grey moon, and a heaviness, as of death, came over him.

He awoke to find St. Quain bending over him—bending over him with a strange, almost womanish, solicitude.

"You fought—you fought well, sir," murmured Bruce.

But shame was strong upon St. Quain. True, he had striven to avoid the combat; yet it was terrible to fight, as he had done, with one so weak.

"Can you stand?" he said. "If so, I'll help you to the house; your bandages have slipped, and the blood is trickling."

"Where did you prick me?" said Bruce.

"Prick you? I robbed you of your sword, and then you fell into a swoon. I am English, sir, but I am not the coward you would wish."

Bruce rose stiffly from the wet, moon-brightened grass, and passed a hand across his brow. "I played the bully awhile since," he stammered; "I raved and swore, and challenged you to fight; but then—God help me, I had lost a wife."

St. Quain would listen to no more. He linked his arm in Bruce's. "And I have gained one," he said softly. "Surely, sir, you will grant feelings to us English, though we're of a different race?"

Dizzy as he was, sick of heart and brain

and fortune, Bruce could not but warm to the manliness, the straightforward wish to give and take which marked his rival's manner. It was his turn now to feel shame; and, in love or war, in pride or shame, it had never been his way to do anything by halves.

"St. Quain," he said, stammering even as he spoke for weakness' sake, "you are a man—and I regret that insult more than any other deed of my wild life."

"Then quit regrets, for I have forgotten all. Does not Janet make a good excuse for any folly?"

They had reached the door by this time, and Bruce of Muirtown leant a heavy hand upon his arm.

"And the girl," he muttered. "Will she go with you, do you think?"

"Yes, though her mother says she shall not."

"And why?"

"I named Culloden in her hearing, and she learnt that my father had fought upon the English side."

Despite his weakness, despite his old sense of loss and his new sense of repentance, Bruce laughed aloud. "Even for a Scot, she dwells too much upon Culloden," he said. "You had better have robbed her plate-chest than mention what you did. The serving-folk are of a like mind, too; you'll have trouble if you wish to take your bride."

"I'll take her, if all Scotland says I shall not."

Like all wildings, Bruce of Muirtown had a heart. He had shown it once to-night, when he could find room for honest admiration of a rival—a rival who had robbed him of a mistress, and who had given him back a forfeit life.

"St. Quain," he said, still standing on the wind-side of the oaken door, "I'll play no dog-in-the-manger part. She's yours, and you shall win her yet."

They passed into the hall, where Lady Lockerbie was seated alone in front of the great fire. She looked up eagerly as they came in, and her face was white as Bruce's own, soon as she saw them standing there—St. Quain in health, his adversary leaning heavily on his arm.

"You—you are hurt, Bruce," she stammered.

"No," he said, "except so far as I was hurt before. Mr. St. Quain has worsted me, and given me my life. I hope that he will count me his friend henceforward."

My lady rose. There was a sort of madness in her face—the madness of long hatred indulged in overmuch. She seemed to gain in stature and in coldness.

“His father fought against my husband,” she said. “He is English; he can be nothing to any Lockerbie.”

“He chances to be husband to a Lockerbie,” put in St. Quain drily, “and he means to claim his right.”

Taller yet she seemed to grow, and her grey eyes deepened, and her voice, no longer cold, was full of passion:

“My daughter is in safety, sir. She would have followed you, to interrupt this duel which has ended so unhappily; but I prevented it.”

“I will find her,” said St. Quain doggedly, “if I spend a twelvemonth in the search.”

“And I will help you,” put in Bruce of Muirtown.

My lady looked from one to the other. “What is this talk of friendliness, Bruce? This stranger has robbed you—robbed you.”

“Nay, it is I who would have robbed

him; and I, no less than Janet, owe my life to him.”

Obeying a sudden impulse, Bruce took my lady to one side and talked to her. St. Quain could hear nothing of what passed; but he guessed that his own cause was being pleaded by one who had so lately wished to kill him. And by-and-by Lady Lockerbie returned, and held her hand out with some show of warmth.

“I cannot pretend to welcome the match,” she said, “but I am old, and weary, and I cannot but see that lives may well be ruined. Will you—will you treat her well?”

Her voice broke down on the last words; and St. Quain saw down into the tenderness that lay beneath her pride.

“I will treat her well,” he answered huskily.

My lady turned to a man-servant who stood by the door. “Prepare the bridal chamber,” she said.

And St. Quain looked out upon the loch, the moonlight and the peaceful sky. And only the whimpering wind was left to recall the storm that had brought a wife to him.

✻ ✻ *THE POETICAL FARMER.* ✻ ✻

BY ALLAN A. FALCONER:

*Long the earth hath kept her silence,
Till the Spring, her lover, came;
Now she answers to his wooing,
And her bosom is aflame.
What enchanting days she dwells in—
Music-haunted, flower-bestrewn;
Butterflies her blossomed dells in—
(Now the turnips should be sown).*

*Apple blossoms blush like morning;
Every hedge is white with may;
Thrush and linnet, lark and ousel,
Vie with carols clear and gay;
Bright laburnum's golden tresses
Mingle with the woodland greens;
Swaying to the wind's caresses—
(It is time to hoe those beans):*

*Oh, what joy to Nature's lover
Comes with the returning Spring;
In his heart life thrills and quickens;
Like a bird, his soul takes wing.
Fancy-free, I would be roaming
In the daisy-sprinkled meads
When the stars look through the gloaming—
(Jingo! What a mess of weeds!).*

The Feud. * * * *

* * * * By HENRY T. JOHNSON.

Telling of the big part two schoolboys played in an old family quarrel.

IT was on the pavilion steps, while we were waiting for our respective innings, that I led Raggles to discourse concerning the Trevarden-Pendarel feud, and what came of it.

"All about it?" said my youthful friend, who had already buckled on his pads: "My dear sir, if that man insists on stepping out to play slows with that break on I shan't have time to tell you half. Jove, though, played, sir! He got that, didn't he? And old Ballantyne seems pretty set. Well, as of course you know, they came up to Kitts together, Pen from a preparatory, Trevarden straight from their place in Cornwall, and, as luck would have it, they were allotted to our house. I was in the common room when they first met. Funniest thing you ever saw. 'Pendarel,' said Mavor, 'this is another new chap, and from your part of the world. Trevarden—know him?'

"Pendarel went ugly white and hard, Tre black as thunder.

"'Certainly not,' said Pen. 'The Pendarels don't know the Trevardens.'

"'For the best of reasons,' said Tre. 'The Trevardens won't know the Pendarels.'

"'What ho!' says I. But Darnell Major cut in with 'Here, I say, you chaps had better understand at once, we don't tolerate any of that kind of "swank" here. We don't care two straws what fellows are at home; when they're up here, one man's as good as another, and a jolly sight better.'

"But the two new chaps turned their backs on each other and stalked off like two turkey-cocks, and Littleton—you know, that chap we call Shortweight, who makes it his special business to find out other people's—said that night in dormy:

"'I've found out all about what's the matter with the two new kids. Their guv'nors are at law over a rotten bit of waste land between the two estates; been at law for generations. Tre's pater puts up fences

along one border, Pen's goes with a gang and pulls 'em down, then sticks up his fence along the other side of it, and Trevarden sails up with his little lot and over goes the other show. Then they go to the Court for injunctions and things. Craddock's pater, who's a K.C., acts for one of 'em, dunno which.'

"Shortweight wasn't far out. Each of the new chaps went on his own to the Head, and refused under any circumstances to share the same study or dormy with the other. Each had wired his pater, and each pater had wired the Head, insisting that his son should be relieved from any communication with the other chap.

"Now, you know our Head isn't the sort to let any fellow dictate to him. He wrote back that while parents' wishes were reasonably studied, if they didn't like to take their chance they could clear out.

"They took their chance, but it was simply rotten the wet blanket those chaps were to everybody in general. If you happened to be chowing with one, the other passed by without seeing you; if one came into common room, the other marched out. So far from speaking, they never looked at each other, always seemed oblivious of each other's existence. We got awfully sick of it, I can tell you:

"They never played in the same cricket match if they could help it, never on any occasion on the same side. If ever they did meet in a scratch game—my! it was an eye-opener to watch them trying to get each other out, or punish each other's bowling, and I wondered what would happen when footer came round again.

"Mind you, they were decent chaps both of them: good sportsmen, with no side or swank about them. And before they'd been up a term they had become immensely popular. Pen played a straight bat, and Tre had a tricky break that lured many a good man to his destruction. They made heaps of chums, and although they were at

such daggers drawn with each other, neither ever uttered a word in disparagement of the other.

"Only Shortweight would every now and then come down with an account of strict injunctions received by Pen from his pater not to associate with his traditional enemy, or by Tre from his governor to the same effect.

"Old Mavor, our house captain, who had a passion for experiments, gave them both their caps for the house team, and things began to be interesting. The first match they played was against Gargoyles. Pen showed what a sportsman he was, for all his pig-headed feud, when Gargoyles' lot were half-way through their innings. They'd been punishing our bowling shocking, and I heard Mavor tell Pen, who had just caught Darnell Major, that he was dashed if he knew who to put on to bowl next.

"I should try Trevarden for an over," said Pen. Then I believe he bit his tongue, he looked so riled with himself.

"I'll take your tip," said the skipper, pitching the leather across to Tre, who went on and took three out of the remaining five wickets for twelve runs.

"That was a good wheeze of Pen's advising the old man to put you on," said I to Tre, when we ran in after last man.

"He advised him?" flashed out Tre in a sudden paddy.

"Why not?" said I. "He was asked for his advice, and the result justified it. What's the matter with him?"

"I have never said a word against Pendarel," said Tre, cold as a refrigerator. Then he added slowly: "Nor have I had any reason to."

"Gargoyles' lot were very fierce that day, and the first four wickets went for something perishing. Mavor sent Pen in to join Ballantyne, and the Cornishman began to express his opinion of the bowling by hitting two boundaries in his first over.

"We're not dead yet," chortled the skipper to me. But his chuckle ended in a groan, for Ballantyne, opening his shoulders, lifted the next ball into the blue, and it came down gracefully into long-field's hands, a perfect sitter.

"Get your pads on quick, Trevarden!" said Mavor. And when I whistled he dug his elbow in my ribs and grunted: "Shut your fat head, I know my business!" And I did a grunt, too. Then I watched with all my eyes.

"Trevarden played his first ball dead

as mutton, the second went a bit to the off, and he cut it clean as a whistle to square-leg, who just missed picking it up.

"Come on!" shouted Pen. And they ran a couple, and I chuckled to Mavor: "Tre's broken his duck, and Pen's broken silence!"

"A lot of chaps began to laugh, but left off to join in the yell that went up as Pen got right under the next ball and lifted it clean out of the ground. Well, to cut the cackle, those two chaps settled down, and gave Gargoyles a spell of leather-hunting that they remember to this day. And I gave it afterwards as my candid opinion that it would take a cast-iron feud to survive that day's events.

"All over the shop it was: 'Played, Pen! You and Trevarden won the match for us!' and: 'By Jove, Trevarden, you and Pen snatched that out of the fire!' And though they spoke no word to each other, even on that day, beyond: 'Come along!' 'No, I won't!' and 'Stand!' while at the wickets, neither could help speaking of the other, and it was: 'Yes, Trevarden played a great innings,' or 'No, no, not I, Pendarel won the match!'

"Still, they were stand offish to each other direct as ever, and the other fellows decided that they knew their own business best, and that if they didn't want to chum they were such good fellows we had no right to worry 'em about it. Then something happened.

"One detention half I was shopping in the town along with Pendarel, when all at once we came into the midst of a lot of townies, who started chipping, booing, and hustling. Of course Kitts' men don't stand a lot of that sort of thing, and before you could say 'knife' we had landed out at them, and there was a general shindy.

"We set our backs to the wall, and hit out for all we were worth, but we were having a hot time of it generally, without a chance even of making a bolt, when all of a sudden the gang who were hammering us were spreadeagled to right and left, and somebody in our cap was shouting: 'Play up, Kitts!' and sending a townie down with every blow.

"Then he put his back to the wall between us, and shoulder to shoulder we made a pretty good stand. The townies had had jolly good change for what they gave when a party of our fellows came sailing along and scattered them.

"That broke down the barrier. No

blooming feud, even with a lawsuit to stiffen it, could stand against that.

"It was ripping of you to lend a hand, Trevarden," said Pen. And I could see he was wondering whether the other would cut or snub him, but he didn't; he simply growled; short and curt like: 'You'd have done as much for me.' But that night they nodded to each other when saying 'So long!' after prayers. And, the ice once broken, the feud began to stand a bad chance. 'Old Trevarden isn't a bad sort,' I said that night to Pen.

"Bad sort? He's one of the best," says he.

"A day or two later he and I, out for a cycle spin, came on Tre sitting by the roadside, looking sick and sorry for himself, and with a puncture you could have put your hand through.

"Worst of it is," he growled, 'I haven't brought my outfit.'

"Here's mine," said Pen: And turning back his wristbands, he set to work and put a patch on that tyre like a workman.

"After that the barrier was smashed to smithereens, and the two Cornishmen became absolute chums, so that if you wanted Pen you asked 'Where's Tre?' and *vice versa*.

"At last came Founder's Day, with the speeches, the match, the crowds of fellows' people, and the whole lot of it.

"I was just cutting across Cloisters to the tuck shop to break into the tip my governor had just weighed out, when I noticed two middle-aged, top-hatted, frock-coated conscript fathers apparently looking for somebody. All of a sudden they nearly cannoned as they came face to face round the same pillar. Then—my, didn't they glare! One of them, wheeling round, shouted to me:

"I say, d'you know where I can find young Pendarel?"

"I expect he's with Trevarden, if you know him," says I, innocent enough. But the old chap shouted 'Wha-at!' so fiercely I nearly jumped out of my skin.

"And the other wheeled round, and he shouted 'Wha-a-t!' too, and just then who should come along but Trevarden and Pen, chattering together like a couple of magpies.

"I thought the old chaps were going to have apoplexy. Each of 'em roared: 'Come here!' And Tre and Pen with a sudden start left each other and went off in different directions with their respective

governors, from what I could hear, each getting a thundering good ragging.

"I didn't see either of them again that day to speak to till after 'Call over,' then I ran against Trevarden.

"Ripping day hasn't it been?' said I. 'Rotten!' says he. 'Glad it's over.'

"Cheerful party!' says I. Later, in my dormy I met Pendarel.

"Had a good time, old chap?' I shouted. He looked at me as cheerful as a wet hen, and slouched off to by-by.

"I've had a rotten time," he growled: Later on, Shortweight sailed in with the news that their governors had kicked up no end of a row with them, and dared them to speak to, communicate with, or take the slightest notice of each other so long as they remained at Kitts.

"Of course it was all tommyrot, but equally of course, if a fellow's pater tells him seriously he's got to do a thing, he's got to do it, if it's jumping off a house. So there was no more for us chaps to say about it, except to return thanks that our paters weren't named Trevarden or Pendarel.

"One day Pen, and I, and a string of us were cycling back from a run along the towpath, when across stream we caught sight of Trevarden just turning out of the river, and paddling up the backwater to the old Abbey Mill.

"Hallo there, Tre!" shouted Darnell Major. 'Come out of that!'

"But Tre didn't hear, anyway heed, and disappeared round the backwater bend.

"The silly ass!" said Darnell, 'if he gets into the mill-race he'll get carried to the wheel and smashed up.'

"We all shouted after Tre like mad, for the river had been swollen with rains and land water, and was running like a rapid. But Tre was out of earshot.

"Come on!" said Pen. And he set off pedaling for life along the path over the bridge, and then, leaving his jigger, he vaulted the fence and made his way through the meadows towards the osiers, and the Abbey Mill, and we followed.

"Through the bush, grass and reeds we went helter-skelter till we reached the osiers, and the millstream bank, and just then, sure enough, round the bend came Trevarden, broadside on, trying all he knew to turn his canoe, to back paddle, to reach either bank, but helpless in the swirl of the swollen mill-race. And there, twenty yards ahead, the big wheel lumbered round, churning the water to a sea of foam.

"We linked arms down the bank, and Darnell shouted to Tre to hold out his paddle. He did. Result—over went the canoe, out he came, down he went, coming up within fifteen yards of the wheel.

"He'll be smashed!" gasped Darnell, white as death. Then he groaned: "Good Lord! they'll both be smashed!" For swift as flash, Pendarel dived right into the eddies after Tre, collared him with one hand, and made a grab at a willow branch with the other, just missing it.

"Meantime somebody made a dash up to the mill and yelled to the people there to stop the wheel. They rushed at the lever, and I heard a sound as if all the waters of the earth were roaring, and rushed back to see the mill-race in a foam with the canoe cracking up in splinters, and there, within four yards of the wheel, Pendarel holding up Trevarden! The wheel, just clear of the stream, was slowing, but it hadn't stopped. Close—closer to it they drifted, round it came, slower and slower. Just as they drifted under its arch, down it came slowly—yes, slowly—and as it touched them down they went.

"But Darnell and Ballantyne had got them with the boat hooks the miller's men brought out, and quicker than I'm taking to tell you they were hauled in to the bank, not dead, but senseless and damaged, how far damaged we didn't quite like to inquire when the doctors came.

"We got 'em back to school, and they were fixed up in adjoining beds in the dormy we call sick bay, and their friends were wired to.

"First thing in the morning I went to the ante-room just as old Sloan, who'd been watching with them all night, came out and lighted his big briar.

"All right, sir?" I whispered. And instead of snapping my head off, as per usual, he growled, quite chummy-like: "Ycs, my Raggles, they're out of the valley of the shadow, but it was a near thing."

"No bones, sir?" says I. "Not one," says he. "In fact, one could almost believe their skulls as thick as yours, if possible." And when he grinned I knew Pen and Tre were all serene. At that moment the door opened, and who should come in but a man in a traveling ulster.

"I knew him in a moment for Tre's governor. He held the Head's wire in his hand.

"What is the nature of the accident?" he asked. "Where is my son?"

"In there," said I. "You can go in

directly, but I'm glad to tell you at once he's out of danger." And Trevarden's pater drew a deep breath as he sank into a chair and leant his head on his hands.

"Thank Heaven for that!" he said.

"Just then the door opened again and in marched—Pendarel senior. He, too, held a telegram.

"What is the nature of my son's accident?" he asked me. And Trevarden blurted out:

"Your son's accident! I thought it was my boy."

"The two men didn't look quite so fiercely at each other just then.

"I up and said: 'It's both your boys, sir. But they're both safe now.'

"How came my lad to be associated with Colonel Pendarel's son?" asked Trevarden, beginning to freeze again.

"I'll tell you," said I. "Your boy's canoe was upset in the mill-race, and his boy jumped in under the very shadow of that awful, swirling mill-wheel." And I shut my eyes a moment: "He forgot all about your wretched lawsuit over your trumpery bit of waste land, he didn't even think about his own splendid self, he thought only about his chum, and he sprang into that boiling race under the shadow of that awful wheel at peril of his life, to save his chum."

"Colonel Pendarel," said Trevarden, pulling himself bolt upright, "doesn't it occur to you that our lads have been showing themselves more sensible than ourselves, and setting us an example?"

"Upon my soul, it does," said Pendarel. And they shook hands and went into the sick dormitory side by side.

"That settled the feud. I spent my last 'long,' half at Pen's place, half at Tre's, and all of it with Tre and Pen. What became of the lawsuit? It collapsed with the feud. Pen and Tre showed me the wretched strip of land between the two big estates, and the places each side of it where they used to pull each other's fences down. The fence goes midway through it now. Hallo, got him! I thought he'd step out to those slows once too often. Now for little me: So long! See me make a duck."

But I didn't. On the contrary, I watched the supple, white-flanneled youngster with the radiant face stride across the sward, buttoning his batting gloves, on the way to the making of that ever memorable century, and later on I cheered him in the surely till then most glorious moment of his bright young life.

Books in Brief. * * *

The gist of a novel in the form of a short story—that is our idea of a popular review. Our selection this month comprises: (1) "*The Sphinx's Lawyer*," by Frank Danby, the writer of that widely-read novel, "*Pigs in Clover*," and (2) "*Beyond the Rocks*," by Elinor Glyn, whose reputation was at once made by the publication of "*The Visits of Elizabeth*," her first novel.

THE SPHINX'S LAWYER.

By FRANK DANBY.

(Wm. Heinemann. 6s.)

I:

149 Prince's Gate.
DEAR MRS. HESELTINE.—You have spoken several times to me of your friend, Mr. Welch-Kennard; you will remember I sat next to him the night of your supper-party at the Carlton. Do you know if he is a good lawyer? I am not mistaken in thinking you told me he was a lawyer, am I?

I find it difficult to get over the loss of my husband. Of course, these are early days, but I feel so bewildered, so at sea, without him. My cousin, Fred Darcy, has been helping me, but now he thinks I ought to have my own "adviser." Fred acts for Darcy Brothers, and it seems there is some doubt as to the value of my interest in the business. It is all very complicated and worrying and I'm terribly ignorant about such matters. Poor Norman has left everything to me, and I am his sole executrix. So, if Mr. Welch-Kennard is a lawyer, and is clever, will you send me his address at once?—Yours, in great haste,

BERENICE DARCY.

In reply to this letter, Mrs. Heseltine, better known to her friends as "*The Sphinx*," wrote back as follows:

MY DEAR,—I am so sorry you are in trouble. And yet I envy you. For you are going to have Errington Welch-Kennard to help you, and that is sufficient to turn trouble into pleasure. The address is 138 Southampton Street; I have written to him for you. How wise of you to think of sending for him. Young, beautiful, £8000 a year, and Kennard! Oh, my dear, what a lucky woman you are! Come and see me soon and tell me all about it. I shall be dying to hear.

SYBIL ALGERNON HESELTINE.

Sybil Heseltine's imagination carried her a long way, after she had Berenice Darcy's note. This is what she wrote to her lawyer—"The Sphinx's" lawyer:

DEAR "BRIGHAM,"—You've had another success. The original Brigham wasn't in it with you. Mrs. Norman Darcy has just written me for your address. Do—do everything you can for her.

She was the red-haired woman in a green frock who sat next to you at supper. She told me the next day she liked the way your mouth turned up, instead of down, at the corners, and the shape of your head. I never told her you said she was like an unfinished sketch for a skeleton by Rossetti. Her dark eyes go awfully well with her red hair. And you admitted she might fill out. Anyway, her husband has died suddenly, and left her trustee or executrix, or something, to his will; she is awfully rich. I know you are made for each other, as solicitor and client, of course, I mean. Come and tell me all about everything directly it happens or before!—Yours, as always,

SYBIL.

Owing to this letter, Errington Welch-Kennard called on Mrs. Darcy at Prince's Gate.

"Is it all clear to you? Can you—will you act for me?" she asked him later, when he had mastered the details of her business.

He turned to her quickly and agreed. "I will act for you—with you." The two last words were low, for her ear alone.

As a wooer of women, Welch-Kennard had been accounted great; but this was altogether new territory for him. There was a charm, a simplicity about Berenice Darcy very different from the other women he had known. He went away thinking of her.

II:

WHEN Kennard called on Mrs. Heseltine, she saw that Berenice Darcy had made an impression upon him. "It is really time you married," she said. "Berenice is an embryo with infinite possibilities."

This invalid—she was half-paralysed—woman had always been a warm friend of Kennard who, in his turn, had befriended her and her late husband in a great trouble.

Now Kennard, although a successful lawyer, was in difficulties. Owing to his extravagant tastes, he wanted money badly.

His friendship with Berenice Darcy progressed apace. In despair he went to Mrs. Heseltine again.

"I have fallen in love with her," he groaned. "I haven't a shadow of excuse; she is twenty years younger than I am, and a hundred years less experienced. The sweetness, the sheer goodness of her, appals me. It's a child, a baby, hardly a woman at all. And I'm going on for forty. I've spent everything, and my income is hypothecated for Heaven knows how many years."

"This is the only time that you have held yourself back, isn't it?" asked Mrs. Heseltine thoughtfully.

"The only time. I begin to see that I have never lived, only wallowed, like a pig in a trough. I have the strangest misgivings. Why is it, Sphinx?"

A great passion was coming to him: The most hopeful sign about him was that he knew his own unworthiness. And the Sphinx goaded him on. She knew that the marriage was a desirable one for him. He had always been the most loyal of friends in spite of his faults. He must marry money. And she resolved to make him marry Berenice before her own days were numbered.

III.

BUT the climax happened in a wholly unexpected manner, for Berenice Darcy's cousin Fred (he loved her in his own prim, precise way) heard scandals of Kennard, and came in hot haste to Berenice about them.

Berenice was indignant: "I don't believe a word against him—I won't hear, or believe a word against him. I know him better than anybody else does, and I know there is no one like him: I am glad, I am proud, that he is my friend."

She had taken Fred Darcy's breath away, and he had not had time to calm himself before Kennard was in the room, and she had challenged him to bring his accusation.

Fred enumerated the different stories. "It seemed to me," he added stiffly, "my duty, having heard these reports, and verified them, to urge Mrs. Norman Darcy to have nothing more to do with you, to take her affairs out of your hands at once. You are not fit to sit down in her presence."

It was true. For a moment Kennard's shield went down, and just as he had seen

the intreaty in Berenice's eyes, so now she saw the pain in his.

"It would make no difference," she said.

For a moment or two after the door had closed on the indignant Fred Darcy, Kennard stood silent. Then he went over to her, where she had sunk down on the sofa.

"Would it make no difference?" he asked softly. "Nothing? Answer me. Don't keep me in suspense. Darling!"

"Not—not if you want me."

"Want you? If you only knew! Will you have me for your husband, dear?—me, all stained and tired? Is that how you love me? Do you love me, Berenice?"

She wanted only the shelter of his incircling arms, she was suddenly shy of what she must tell him. He let her hide her face now, against his shoulder. And, holding her so, again his conscience shook him, clamorous doubt made desperate his appeal.

"Child, child, don't be glad, don't be happy. It's not a good thing for you. Think! I am years older than you, and poor, in debt, too, with millstones round my neck. Think!"

"Oh, I am glad I may; I am so glad I may—"

"What are you glad of, my sweet?"

"That I may care, as much as I like: I am glad you are poor, and—and have troubles that I may lighten, and—and that you want me," she whispered.

* * * * *

And so they were married. No one but a pure-hearted woman like Berenice could have held Kennard. Once he was carried away by his temperament to make love to another woman. But the cloud passed, and he ultimately understood, through Berenice's goodness, that virtue of supreme loyalty which every woman has a right to exact from her husband. "You women, you dear, good women," he said to his wife: "It must have been through watching your power of love and forgiveness that the ideal was conceived of the love of God for all mankind. How much too good you are for us! Berenice, it is you who have taught me that."

"Then I have taught you a creed in which I have no belief," she answered, smiling: "I don't think many of us are good enough, or great enough, for the task we have been given, to love and serve. We grow our souls that way." And her grown soul shone through her beautiful eyes.

BEYOND THE ROCKS.



By ELINOR GLYN.

(Duckworth & Co. 6s.)

I.

THE hours were composed mostly of dull or rebellious moments during the period of Theodora Fitzgerald's engagement to Mr. Brown, who was elderly and rich.

To enter a family composed of three girls—two of the first family, one almost thirty and a second very plain—and a father with a habit of accumulating debts and obliged to live at inexpensive foreign seaside towns, required a strong motive; and this Josiah Brown found in the deliciously-rounded, white velvet cheek of Theodora, the third daughter, to say nothing of her slender grace, and a pair of gentian-blue eyes that said things to people in the first glance.

That one must marry a rich man if one got the chance, to help poor darling papa, had always been part of Theodora's creed, more or less inspired by papa himself. But when it came to the point, and Josiah Brown was offered as a husband, Theodora had had to use all her nerve and self-control to prevent herself from refusing.

The marriage took place at Dieppe, and it was a perfectly miserable little bride that got into the train for Paris, accompanied by a fat, short, prosperous, middle-class English husband, who had accumulated a large fortune in Australia quite by accident in a comparatively few years. He was only fifty-two, though his head was bald, and his figure far from slight. He had a liver, a chest, and a temper, and he adored Theodora:

II.

JOSIAH BROWN fell ill soon after his marriage, and when he became convalescent, resolved to pay a visit to Paris on his homeward way to England. When in Paris, Theodora's father turned up. He was making violent love to a wealthy American widow, and, at a dinner given by the widow, Theodora first saw Lord Bracondale, who was as handsome as a Greek god, and thirty-one. He had seen all the most beautiful women of the world; but, when he met Theodora, they seemed ugly by mere force of comparison:

Lord Bracondale's conversation pleased Theodora; he seemed to understand exactly what she wanted to talk about. From the beginning of the dinner, Bracondale was saying to himself that she was the loveliest white flower he had yet beheld, in a path of varied experiences. She appealed to him in a maddening way. There came to him the picture of her life, sacrificed no doubt to others' needs. He seemed to see the long years in which she would be tied to Josiah Brown, the cramping of her soul, the dreary desolation of it. Then a tenderness came over him, a chivalrous tenderness unfelt by him towards women now for many a long day:

III.

THEY met constantly, the inexperienced girl and the experienced man of the world who was in the throes of a genuine passion. But it was at Versailles that matters came to a climax. They had spent a happy day together, mostly apart from the others of the party, and Bracondale brought her back in his motor. "The time grows nearer," he said, "when we must go back to the world: First to dinner with the others, and then—to Paris. I would like to stay thus always—just alone with you."

When he looked into her eyes, the blue was troubled with a mist as of coming tears.

"What have I done to make your dear eyes wet?" he said incoherently. "Oh, I love you so, I love you so, and I have only made you sad."

She gave a little inarticulate cry. "Listen!" she said gently. "I ought to have known to where we were drifting, I am wicked to have let you say all you said to-day, but, oh! I was asleep, I think, and only knew that I was happy. But now you have shown me—and the dream is broken up. Come, let us go back to the world."

Then he raised his eyes to her face, and they were haggard and miserable.

"Yes," she said simply, "I love you, but that only makes it all the harder—and we must say 'Good-bye' at once, and go our different ways. You who are so strong and know so much—I trust you—you must help me to do what is right."

IV.

LADY BRACONDALÉ was delighted to see her son again in London. Her pet scheme was to marry him off to Morella Winmarleigh, who was about as interesting as a jellyfish, and had the same kind of passive malignity if she differed from any one.

When Morella met Theodora Brown at Sir Patrick Fitzgerald's country house, Beechleigh, she immediately conceived a fierce jealousy of her, for Bracondale's infatuation with regard to the fair young bride was pretty evident, although he did his best to hide it. And Theodora, knowing she loved Bracondale with a love which could never alter, yet determined that her husband should have no reason to complain of her conduct.

Bracondale rose superior to his own selfishness, and at their last interview in the gloomy firs of Beechleigh, all that was best and noblest in him came to the front:

"Good-bye!" he said brokenly. "You have taught me all that life means; all that it can hold of pleasure and pain. Henceforth, it is the grey path of shadows; and—oh! God take care of you and grant us some peace."

Then he folded her again in his arms, and held her so close it seemed the breath must leave her body. They walked on silently, and silently entered the house by the western garden door. He left Beechleigh that evening.

V.

THE next evening, Miss Winmarleigh came down to put some letters in the post-box. Theodora, finding the box full, had just left a couple of letters on the table. One was addressed to her husband, the other to Lord Bracondale:

"The husband and—the lover," Miss Winmarleigh said to herself, seized the letters, and carried them off to her room: Once there, with the aid of a spirit-lamp, she steamed both letters, and put them back in the wrong envelopes. She did not read them. Only housemaids did that sort of thing, she decided. She went down and put the letters near the box.

As a result of this despicable manoeuvre, the next morning Josiah Brown received the letter Theodora had written to Bracondale: After speaking of the pain of parting from him, she wrote:—

Josiah has kept his side of our bargain, so I must keep mine, and be faithful to him always in word and deed. You do not know how good he has always been to me, and generous and indulgent. It is not his fault that he is not of our class, and I must do my utmost to make him happy, and atone for this wound which I have unwittingly given him, and which he is, and must always remain, unconscious of.

The next day, Bracondale received the following letter from Josiah Brown:—

MY LORD,—You will have received, I presume, a communication addressed to you and intended for me. The inclosed speaks for itself. I send it to you because it is my duty to do so. If I were a young man, though I am not of your class, I would kill you. But I am growing old, and my day is over. All I ask of you is never, under any circumstances, to let my wife know of her mistake about the letters. I do not wish to grieve her, or cause her more suffering than you have already brought upon her.

Believe me, yours faithfully,
JOSIAH BROWN.

VI.

BRACONDALÉ wrote back, deeply touched by Josiah Brown's magnanimity:—

DEAR SIR,—I am overcome with your generosity and your justice. I understand and appreciate the sentiments you express, when you say had you been younger you would have killed me; and I, on my side, would have been happy to offer you any satisfaction you might have wished, and am ready to do so now, if you desire it. At the same time, I would like you to know, in deed I have never injured you. My deep and everlasting grief will be that I have brought pain and sorrow into the life of a lady who is very dear to us both. My own life is darkened for ever as well, and I am going away out of England for a long time, as soon as I can make my arrangements. I will respect your desire never to inform your wife of her mistake, and I will not trouble either of you again. Only, by a later post, I intend to answer her letter, and say farewell.

Believe me, yours truly,

BRACONDALÉ.

* * * * *

When October set in, Josiah caught a bad cold and died. Eighteen months later, Theodora and Bracondale met again, and, safe in each other's arms, spent their lives in those smooth waters beyond the rocks.

Our Pinafore Pages. ❀ ❀

In the popular magazines of the present day children expect to find a certain number of pages set aside for their own especial enjoyment. In THE NOVEL MAGAZINE they are not disappointed. Each story is written in simple language that every child can understand.

TEDDY'S ADVENTURES UP A GUM-TREE. ❀

❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ By RITA CAY.

Telling of a little boy's funny experience.

WHEN Bobby became Bob and went to school, little Teddy was left lamenting. Bobby was his leader in all his games and occupations, and his word was Teddy's law.

Teddy was very sad indeed as he waved his hand to Bobby—I mean Bob—as the train left the station. His mother saw the tears that would escape and run down his cheek in spite of all his efforts to keep them back, and she knew all about Teddy's feelings, because there were tears in her own eyes.

"Never mind, old man," she said, "there are always the holidays." And she made a calendar for the lonely little boy so that he could tear off a slip of paper each day. Teddy was in such a hurry for the time to pass quickly that sometimes he tore off two pieces of paper in one day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, because his mother had explained that when he came to the last slip Bob would come home.

She was quite right in spite of Teddy's hurry.

The school broke up ten days earlier than usual, because so many of the boys had mumps; so on the very day that Teddy tore off the last slip of paper but one, there was a letter saying that Bob was coming the next day.

Bobby had gone away, but it was certainly Bob who came back; that means that a little boy left home, but school had made him a big boy who talked slang and said "Mother" instead of "Mummy."

Mother kept very near to Teddy that first day of Bob's return because she was afraid he would miss the old Bobby as much as she did, and that the new Bob would feel too grand to play with his little brother.

But it was all right. Bob was a greater hero than ever to Teddy, who listened to all he said with rapt attention and interest.

The boys were allowed a great deal of freedom and liberty in the garden and fields, but there were some rules that they were never to break. One was never to leave the gate from the yards open.

Alas! one day Bobby did, and while he and Teddy were busy building their new hut in the paddock, they were suddenly aware that all the pigs from the yard had calmly strolled across the paddock and into the garden of their next-door neighbour, Mr. Brown. Now, Mr. Brown was very fond of his garden, and was rather a cross old man who didn't like children.

Bob looked aghast at what had happened because he knew what harm pigs can do in gardens, and there were at least twenty pigs of various sizes already in Mr. Brown's.

"If we can't get these pigs out we'll be up a gum-tree," exclaimed Bob, and raced away.

Teddy ran after him as fast as he could, Bob's words ringing in his ears. It seemed to him that it would be much more serious if they were up a gum-tree—whatever sort of a tree that was—than if the pigs ate everything in Mr. Brown's garden.

In vain Bob and Teddy tried to get the pigs out. They went into the garden quite boldly and shouted at them, but it was no good. If they raced round one way, the pigs went running round the other.

Bob could naturally run faster than Teddy, and soon left him behind. Poor little Teddy raced on. But he grew very hot and tired, and he could still see some of the pigs in the garden devouring cabbages and flowers alike. And, worse than all, Bob had disappeared from view. Where could he be? Teddy wondered. And then

a brilliant idea struck him—Bob must be up the gum-tree. That is what he said would happen to them unless they got the pigs out of the garden. But the pigs were still there, so Teddy was quite sure that Bob was up that gum-tree.

"But he said both of us," murmured poor, tired little Teddy.

"Why aren't you here, too?" echoed Bob's voice. Teddy looked round, and sure enough he found himself in the fork of a high tree. Bob was a little higher up, but he wasn't in a fork and he wasn't holding on!

"Oh, Bob, you'll fall," gasped the little chap: "No, I won't, silly. I'm stuck, don't you see?" And then Teddy did see.

The tree was a gum-tree, of course, and not only was it sticky but it was stick pure and simple, and it ran all over you. Then Teddy realised that he, too, was completely stuck to the branches on both sides of him, and that every minute he became stiffer and stiffer.

"Gum's worse than seccotine," he said to Bob. His mother always mended his toys with seccotine; that was how he knew how sticky it was. Bob didn't answer, and Teddy by this time couldn't turn his head to see why.

"It'll be all right when it rains," he mumbled, as his mouth was getting too stiff to speak, "we'll melt then."

Then he saw some of the pigs come towards him and begin to climb the tree. Some people think that pigs can't climb, but have they ever seen them try?

Teddy knew that these pigs could climb because he saw them. He thought they would take him for a cabbage or some fruit growing on the tree and eat him up, and he knew he was too stiff to prevent them. But when they got just a little way up the trunk of the tree they stuck.

Yet still the pigs came on, and still they stuck as soon as they were on the tree itself. Some of the pigs were very clever, though, because they began to climb over the other stuck pigs, and each pig got further and further up the tree.

Teddy saw that very soon they would be able to reach him off each other's backs, and he longed for rain to come and unstick him. He thought that the first drops of a good shower would be the nicest thing in the world to feel, and he longed and he longed for them. He longed so hard that at last he felt them, and he was so delighted and relieved that he shouted up to Bob: "Here they are."

"Here they are," echoed Bob.

The raindrops were beginning to loosen Teddy, and he was just able to turn his head. So he looked in the direction he had heard Bob's voice. Another surprise. There was Bob with the gardener and the coachman driving the pigs away. How had Bob got down? Teddy supposed the rain must have melted the gum round him first. Teddy was surprised to see how quickly the pigs could run after being so sticky, and he said to Bob: "They run so quickly."

"So would you if you had a broom behind you," answered Bob shortly. He was hot and tired after having run so fast to get help.

The mystery of the gum-tree was never cleared up for Teddy, because after Bob's sharp retort about the pigs he did not like to ask him how he got down the tree, and no one else knew of their adventure. The gum-tree was in Mr. Brown's garden, so Teddy has not had the chance of seeing it again, but some day he means to make friends with Mr. Brown, and then he can learn all about the funny tree in his garden.

But really and truly I believe that Teddy dreamt all that part about the gum-tree.

* * * BABY'S KITTEN. * * *

BY MILLICENT HARDMAN.

*Our Baby has a kitten,
A fluffy little thing,
That plays for hours with Baby,
And with a piece of string.
They romp and roam all over,
Till both begin to tire;
And then they sit together,
Beside the nursery fire.*

*And Baby sings to Kitty,
And Kitty purrs to her;
They love each other dearly—
They're such a happy pair!
And when at last comes evening,
And Baby goes to bed,
She showers "Good-night" kisses
On Kitty's pretty head.*

*And Kitty purrs to Baby,
And tries her very best
To say: "Good-night, dear playmate,
Sweet dreams and pleasant rest."*

LITTLE COMFORTER.

By MARY WALKER.

The story of a bird that loved a maiden.

A MAIDEN sat all alone in the sun, in a beautiful garden; but there was great sorrow in her heart, for her lover had left her that day, and she knew that it might perhaps be years before he came back to her again. As she thought of this the great tears gathered in her eyes, and slowly rolled down her cheeks. No friend was near to speak loving, cheering words to her, so she wept on unheeded.

A little bird was sitting on a bough of a tree near. It chirruped inquiringly, then hopped nearer and nearer, until at length it perched itself on the back of the garden seat. Its little bird-heart was touched with pity for this young human being who was in such bitter distress.

It began to sing softly and very sweetly. It sang of the joy and the love that had been in the happy past, when the maiden and her lover had wandered hand-in-hand through the beautiful country, seeing it all with clear, bright eyes, unclouded by sorrow.

Then the little bird sang of their parting. It had seemed so terrible, because it was the only sorrow that had ever come into her gay young life; for this was a maiden's first grief, and the pain she suffers then seems like joy seen through a mist of tears when she looks back upon it in later years. And then it sang of hope, beautiful bright hope, that is the greatest friend of the young.

As the bird sang, the tears fell fast from the maiden's eyes; only now they were not hot, bitter ones, that scalded as they fell, but rather ones that were half-sweet and half-sad, that eased her heart.

When the bird stopped singing, the maiden smiled gratefully at it, as it chirruped its farewell.

"Oh, come again, my little comforter," she whispered to it. "Do come to me again."

Every day the bird came and sang to the maiden in the garden. It used to sing of all it saw during its long flights over the land. It told her of all the sorrow and joy around her, that she knew nothing about, and had never thought of before.

The maiden grew to love her "little

comforter," as she called the bird, and began to wish that she could keep it with her always. So, one morning, she took a beautiful cage, with gilded bars, and put it beside her on the seat in the garden. The little bird knew in a moment what was in the maiden's mind; and it said in its song:

"Ah, maiden, in the Spring, when I saw you in your sorrow and loneliness, I comforted you, and you love me for it. But, think! shall I give up my freedom, and all this beautiful outside world, to live in a little cage and sing to you? All my kindred are making ready to fly away to warm countries where the sun always shines. Only I would be left behind—and in captivity. When your lover comes back to you, will you forget me, and so let the song that you loved be silent for ever?"

"My little comforter!" the maiden cried reproachfully. "How could I ever forget all you have been to me? How could I neglect you? You shall always eat the daintiest food, and have the clearest, freshest water to drink and bathe in. Your cage shall not be a prison to you, but a little home that you will love as you did your nest."

The bird gave a wistful glance around, then rose slowly in the air, and winged its last flight in the free, lovely sunshine.

In the meantime, the maiden was weeping below in her garden. She felt sure the little bird had left her for ever, not being able to bear the thought of perpetual captivity. But after that last long flight, the bird came back, and flew into the cage without any hesitation. So did it give its life and freedom into the maiden's keeping.

As time wore on, it brought peace and happiness to the bird and its mistress. The gilded cage became, indeed, as dear to the bird as its own little nest had been, and the maiden treasured it and cared for it as her very dearest possession.

The Winter months passed away, and with the Spring all the bird's friends came home from over the sea.

They looked in at the window, and told

it of the sunny lands they had visited. Then they begged it to rejoin them, take a mate, and build itself a nest.

"Come," they sang—"come with us! For joy comes after sorrow, as the Spring and Summer come after the dark, dreary Winter. The maiden's lover is coming back to her, and she will no longer need you. So come with us, for your task here is done."

"No," answered the bird, "I gave my life to this maiden, and until she opens my cage door and bids me fly away, I will stay with her. I comforted her in her sorrow, and surely she will need my sympathy in her joy. My task will never end. Good-bye! good-bye!"

So the birds left it there and flew away to choose their own mates, and build their nests.

At last one morning the maiden came with the light of great happiness shining in her face. In her hands she was holding a letter.

"Little bird! little bird!" she cried. "All my long, weary waiting is over. I shall see him—my lover—to-morrow."

"Oh, maiden!" sang the bird. "Surely the time has not been all unhappy! Has not my song cheered your loneliness?"

The pathetic ring in the bird's sweet song touched the maiden's heart, and she answered:

"My little comforter! I could not have lived without you. And he will love you, too, and thank you. We will make your life one long holiday. Oh, little bird, that sang so sweetly in my time of sorrow, sing to me now in my joy."

There was no taint of jealousy in the little bird's generous mind, and, as it sang, its mistress' joy found more than an echo in its heart.

The next day dawned very clear and bright, and as the little bird thought of its mistress, its musical voice trembled and thrilled with sympathy and love.

While the dew was still wet on the grass, her lover had come to the maiden, and wandering with him in the garden, she forgot everything but him. Her eyes and ears and heart were all for him to-day.

The bird in its gilded cage caroled forth its sweet song of welcome unheeded. It sang of the dark, weary days that were gone, and the bright, unclouded future that was coming. Its heart beat high with pride as the time passed on, for it thought the lovers were searching the

garden for the food it loved best, and that together they would come to feed and tend it.

But the rays of the sun beat down upon its cage, and it grew hotter and hotter. Its water was all dried up, and it had no food. Still the maiden did not come. Slowly a dreadful thought forced its way into its mind. Had she forgotten it in her own happiness?

As the time crept on its song changed to a wail of suffering, as it thought of the glorious freedom that belonged to it by right, and that it had sacrificed to gratify a maiden's fancy.

"My comrades were right," it moaned; "my task is done, and now I shall perish here alone and helpless in the sunshine. I made her dark hours pass cheerily, but in her happiness she forgets me. My task is done! my task is done!"

As it sang—it was but the dying shadow of its sweet song—the bitter grief grew more and more in the bird's tender, faithful, little heart, till at last it could hold no more.

Late in the afternoon, the maiden suddenly said: "My bird! I had forgotten all about it!" and then she told her lover how it had come to her and comforted her when he was away. Together they hurried into the house, but when they reached the cage, the little bird was lying at the bottom of it—cold and still! With bitter tears of self-reproach the maiden lifted it from its cage and held it close against her heart. Her warm tears fell upon it and revived its fast-ebbing life. Then she said:

"Dear little one, forgive my cruel selfishness, and fly back to the beautiful free life you forsook for my sake."

"Maiden," gently answered the bird, "I will go to the little bird-love who is waiting and longing for me. But I love you still; your tears washed away all feeling of reproach as they fell upon me, and we will build our nest in the big tree near your window: Maiden, farewell! farewell!"

The bird rose once more into the air, feebly at first, but soon its wings grew stronger, and it flew swiftly and happily away to join its mate.

The lovers stood hand-in-hand watching it, and as it disappeared from their view the maiden laid her head upon her lover's shoulder and whispered softly: "Dear, if my little comforter had died, all my joy would have turned to pain!"

Reaping the Whirlwind.

By ALFRED LEWIS, A.R.C.A.

THE FIRST TWELVE CHAPTERS.

DURING the marriage ceremony between Miss Adeliza Fane Capell, niece of a rich East Indian merchant, and the Hon. Kenneth Wilgorton, son of the late Viscount Clapham and of Lady Clapham, a slight disturbance is caused by two foreigners—a man and a woman—but no reason can be assigned for it.

On arriving at Mr. Fane Capell's house, the newly-made bride retires to her room. The next thing that is known is that she has disappeared, leaving a note for her husband, which says that she cannot live with him. No one had seen her go, but it transpires later that one of the foreigners who had been at the marriage was watching the house for a long time after the return of the couple. Could he have anything to do with the mystery?

Frederick Whinstone, Wilgorton's best man, starts to make some inquiries. He tracks down the two foreigners, and finds that they are a Madame Lenoir and her son, at whose school the missing bride was educated. They deny all knowledge of Mrs. Wilgorton, but outside their door Whinstone picks up a handkerchief bearing that lady's initials. He feels there is some deep mystery here, and returns at once to Wilgorton, who, as soon as he hears the story, starts off in hot haste with a pistol in his pocket.

Whinstone is engaged to Gertrude, daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, a couple with very decided religious views. After seeing Wilgorton, he goes to their house, where he is arrested on suspicion of murdering Monsieur Lenoir, who has been found shot in a railway carriage. He is allowed out on bail.

Among Gertrude's admirers is Mr. Josiah Pike, a widower and an ardent anti-ritualist. He is a friend and co-worker of Colonel Brunell, who favours him as a suitor for his daughter. Gertrude is sitting alone in the drawing-room at her home thinking of Whinstone, when suddenly she hears Mr. Pike's voice saying: "A penny for your thoughts, Miss Gertrude."

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Pike's Downfall.

GERTRUDE looked up quickly. She was a little startled. Mr. Pike stood close to her, and was regarding her with a look of admiration which she could not help noticing, and which made her feel uncomfortable.

"A penny for your thoughts," he repeated, rubbing his hands.

His attempts at a joke were usually of a well-worn description.

Mr. Pike was an abstemious man, but this evening—perhaps to raise his courage to the required pitch, in view of a certain project he was contemplating—he had taken an extra glass of port; and he showed it. Not that he was by any means intoxicated; only a little flushed and more talkative than was his wont.

Gertrude made some reply, and rose from her seat.

"Nay, I am sure anything of yours must be of interest and value, Miss Brunell. I only wish I could flatter myself that you had been thinking of me just a little," he said, with clumsy gallantry. "Do not go away, I beg. Your good father is adding a few corrections to his manuscript. So kind and flattering to consult me. Mrs. Brunell—"

"My mother will be here presently. I will tell her—"

"No, do not go, I beg—do not! You see, if I am not exactly an old friend of the

family, I may perhaps have some claim to be called an intimate one; and I would much rather you did not trouble Mrs. Brunell. What is the good of being a friend of the house, if one cannot dispense with ceremony? Not but that I should always be charmed with being your friend under any circumstances."

Gertrude resumed her seat. There was something in his manner which made her unwilling to be alone with him; but he was a guest, he was her father's friend, she believed him to be a good man, and she was bound to be considerate and courteous towards him. Her own excited condition might account for the feeling she had; and her parents would not be absent from the room long.

Mr. Pike leant back in his chair, put the tips of his fingers together, and fixed his eyes upon her with a stare which had something uncanny about it. He replied in monosyllables to the remarks she made, and continued to stare, until she became more and more uncomfortable.

She had heard her brothers express the opinion more than once that Pike was half mad; and she began to fear that such was really the case. Her nerves were in such a state of tension that a small thing terrified her. She felt that she must do something to make him take his eyes off her, or she should scream, so fixed was his gaze. The eye with the cast was particularly unpleasant. She took an album of photographs from the table, and held it towards him.

"I do not know whether you have seen this," she said. "There is a recent portrait of my father in it, which we think a very good one."

He took the book from her, glanced at it for a moment, and then fixed his eyes upon her again in the same way as before. She wished her mother would come.

His prolonged gaze, disagreeable as it was, had a sort of fascination over her, which she imagined must be something like the fascination serpents are said to exercise over birds. When she turned away her head, she could still feel that his eyes, especially the one with the cast in it, were fixed upon her, and she felt compelled to look again.

Agatha could still be heard strumming on the piano. The tune she was hammering out was "Home, Sweet Home," which was one of the few secular songs Colonel Brunell tolerated in his house. Why did she not leave off playing, and come in? She would have done so long ago had another than Mr. Pike been there. Gertrude took up her neglected needlework.

"Nay, do not go," he repeated, as though he feared she was again about to leave the room. He paused a moment, and then added: "Do you ever think of the serious responsibilities of life?"

Poor girl! the serious responsibilities of life, in one aspect or another, had been dinned into her ears ever since she was born, and at the present moment she felt overwhelmed with care.

"Oh, I think so," she answered, glad of any interruption to the silent stare.

"I am sure of it," he returned. "I need not have asked the question. I have long noticed the difference between you and the majority of the young ladies one meets: You see, dear Miss Brunell, I have a serious purpose in my own life; your good father approves of it, and I should like to feel that you are in sympathy with it. My purpose, as you know, is to rouse the English people, at the trumpet call of duty, to resist the encroachments of Rome."

She had heard this before, and so she made no reply; indeed, her thoughts had flown back to her lover once more, now that the spell of that frightful stare was broken. Mr. Pike continued to speak on his favourite topic; but she paid little heed to what he said, until her attention was suddenly aroused by a peculiar change in the tone of his voice, and by the words:

"It is not good for man to be alone."

She thought he was alluding to the necessity for companionship and support in the work he had undertaken.

"Sympathetic companionship in any work must be helpful," she remarked, for the sake of saying something.

"I am glad you think so, dear Miss Brunell. And are you in sympathy with my work?"

"As far as I know anything about it; but my knowledge on the matter is very limited."

"But you will soon know more, Gertrude—may I call you Gertrude?"

The look on his face and the tones of his voice alarmed her.

"I think I will see what is keeping mother so long," she said.

"No, no, please don't go!" he urged. "Gertrude, sweet Gertrude, there was a portrait of your charming self in the album you showed me; what, what is a photograph compared with the living, breathing reality! Gertrude—"

Unfortunately, at this moment Mr. Pike's false teeth slipped down; but, with a rapid movement of the mouth, he readjusted them, and went on:

"Sweet Gertrude, you know what I mean. You know that I love you—that I want you to be my wife—my own sweet wife. I hope to do a great work in the world. I am even now a power amongst those who pretend to sneer. I am in correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the Prime Minister, and with other highly-placed people. The Houses of Parliament will be compelled to listen to me. I shall occupy what may perhaps be called a great position—though that is not what I work for—and you shall share it. It is all nothing without you, sweet girl. And I have means, you know. You can have whatever you want; and we shall be as happy as birds in a cage—aye, happier; for birds peck at each other; which we should never do," he added, with a chuckle, which again endangered the stability of his teeth.

Gertrude had at first endeavoured to interrupt him, and afterwards she was speechless with surprise and indignation. That any man, and especially Mr. Pike, should offer her his love, and ask her to marry him, at a time when the man to whom she was betrothed was in such dire straits, was an intolerable insult.

To do Mr. Pike justice, he was not aware of her engagement to Whinstone. He was not naturally observant, and had not noticed

those symptoms which had partly revealed the secret to others, and he also had reason to believe that Colonel Brunell would not be seriously displeased at the idea of his union with his daughter. In her anger, Gertrude overlooked the fact that the engagement had not been made known outside the family.

"Sir," she said, "this is too much! How can you?"

"Oh, my dear Miss Brunell, hear what I have to say," he went on, taken a little aback by her words and manner, but placing himself, perhaps involuntarily, between her and the door. "I admire you. I love you with all my heart and soul; and it is the first time I have ever known what true love is."

"I thought you had been married?" she said, with some scorn.

"Yes, yes; to a very worthy woman; but what of that?"

"Then what you say to me must be a great exaggeration. I am surprised at you."

"There is no reason why a man should not marry twice, is there, sweet girl?"

She turned away in silent contempt. It aroused disgust that he should acknowledge, as it seemed to her, that he had had no true love for his late wife, to whom he owed all the wealth of which he had spoken. Feeling as she did, it seemed to her treason to the dead to speak as he had done; and she made no allowance for the excitement of the moment and the exaggerated language of a suitor. He appeared to partly read her thoughts:

"She was so different from you," he said: "I was a good husband to her; and I think she had no cause to complain. But one cannot control one's feelings altogether; and I love you, sweet Gertrude. I feel for you as I never felt for her."

"I am sorry for it. Do you not know——"

"Don't say so!" he intreated, apparently scarcely conscious that he was interrupting her. "Consent to marry me, and love will be sure to come in time. I shall be content even if it is not the wild love described in foolish romances, and which silly boys ask. And, remember, I am a husband of whom your father would approve."

"Mr. Pike, it is useless to continue the conversation. Of course, I am much obliged to you for your good opinion, but what you ask is impossible—utterly impossible!"

"I am sure your father would approve."

"Sir, this is a matter which, under any

circumstances, I must decide for myself. My father would allow that I have a right to do that. Besides—I regret very much what has taken place—what you have said; and the best way is to forget it as soon as possible."

He had some of the instincts of a gentleman, and had he realised that her distress was quite real, would probably have desisted, but he was too excited to see this—a fact partly owing to love, and partly to the extra glass of wine he had taken.

"Miss Brunell, I am a marked man—I mean, a man of mark. I have a career before me, even though no longer young. The world will hear more of me yet. You would not be marrying an obscure, unknown individual."

"Mr. Pike, even if my feelings towards you were—could be—very different from what they are, the argument you use would rather deter me from than induce me to accede to your wishes. I have said that I have some sympathy with what you call your mission in life; but I do not understand such matters very well, and it does sometimes seem to me that your methods are perhaps mistaken, however good your intentions may be."

"This from your father's daughter!"

"You compel me to speak plainly, Mr. Pike. I have no wish to criticise your actions. Let the matter rest. I am greatly distressed just now. My father will explain."

"I would do a great deal for you, Miss Brunell; but there can be no compromise with error."

"I think you mistake me, Mr. Pike. I have no wish to influence your actions, even if I could. It is only right that your own conscience should be your guide."

"And my proposal?"

"In that matter nothing would or could alter my decision."

"You refuse me?"

"I have declined the honour you offer me. Do not press me further. Nothing can alter me."

"I believe you prefer a suspected murderer to a man whose mission it is to purify the Church."

"Mr. Pike!"

"Oh, I can see it now! It is that young Whinstone, with his airs and graces, and his contempt for all that is good. He stands in the way. A man accused of murder, and who may be hanged, for anything we know. A lofty choice, truly!"

"Sir, let me pass you!"

"I understand now your words and looks when we were speaking of this young fellow before dinner."

"Mr. Pike, you forget yourself! Will you allow me to leave the room—or must I ring the bell?"

"Now you are angry," he said, changing his tones from the passion which had marked his latter words to intreaty. "Do you not think it due to me—your father's friend—to listen to what I have to say?"

"I have listened too long, and have received insult in return. You do not—you cannot—know what you are saying: Do you think it was kind, generous, acting the part of my father's friend, to utter to his daughter the things you have just said?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Brunell. It was my love for you which made me do it. As a woman, you should understand that. Stay a few minutes more, Miss Brunell, and listen to me."

He seized her hand, and actually dropped on one knee. Whether he had some vague notion that this was the proper position for a lover urging his suit, whether the act was caused by an involuntary rush of passionate feeling, accelerated by the extra glass of wine he had taken, or whether it was intended to make amends for his late rudeness, it is impossible to say. Certainly no one—not even his best friend or worst enemy—would have suspected Mr. Josiah Pike of reading love stories, and of modeling his behaviour upon them, or, indeed, of having any romance in his composition at all. It may be, however, that similar feelings usually produce similar results in persons very differently constituted, or that in such circumstances as the one described, as in many others, extremes meet.

He looked ludicrous enough in this suppliant position—probably most men would—and Gertrude, who was not devoid of some sense of humour, could have laughed, had laughter been possible with her just then.

Before she could release herself from this awkward position, the door opened, and her brother Robert entered. Whinstone was standing in the hall beyond; but in such a position that he could not fail to see what was taking place in the room.

"By Jupiter!" ejaculated Robert, drawing back.

Mr. Pike sprang to his feet with an exclamation which from any man of less assured principles would have sounded like an oath: There was a dark scowl upon his face.

An embarrassing silence followed.

"I have brought Fred to see you," said Robert:

At that moment Colonel and Mrs. Brunell appeared in the hall, and the Colonel was heard saying in very frigid tones:

"This is a surprise, Mr. Whinstone: We did not expect to see you again for some little time."

"I fetched him, pater," Robert explained. "I went to see how things had been going on—we all wanted to know, don't you see—and then finding him at home, I pressed him to come and tell his adventures himself."

No reply was made, and the silence was so eloquent that Whinstone would have left the house at once but for Gertrude: What he had seen through the open door disturbed him a little. He was not jealous. He had perfect trust in Gertrude: But to suddenly come upon another man very evidently making love to his own adored one is not a pleasant sight for any lover, and especially when he himself is supposed to be in a position of grave difficulty.

Gertrude herself was flushed, vexed, and confused, and she did not advance to greet him with that spontaneous readiness she would have shown at another time. She could not but feel the awkwardness of the situation.

"You had better come in the drawing-room, Mr. Whinstone," said Mrs. Brunell; and there was more constraint than friendliness in her tone. "We are all anxious to hear the result of your—of what took place this morning."

Whinstone did not feel inclined to talk about his affairs in the presence of Mr. Pike, and he replied simply that the matter to which Mrs. Brunell referred had been adjourned.

There was an attempt at conversation on indifferent subjects for a few seconds; but everyone seemed ill at ease. Mr. Pike could not conceal his chagrin; and he lingered probably only because a sudden exit would have made matters worse. Gertrude could not recover all at once from her painful embarrassment. Whinstone felt that he was not welcome to Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, and was vexed with Robert for hurrying him up to the drawing-room without first announcing him: Robert was annoyed on Whinstone's account, while his father and mother resented Whinstone's coming at all.

Poor Josiah hurriedly took his leave

as soon as he conveniently could, in spite of the Colonel's pressing invitation to stay a little longer. Frederick had taken Gertrude's hand; they spoke together in low tones; but there was some constraint even in their greeting.

"Why has Pike gone so early?" asked the Colonel pettishly. "I wanted to consult him again about my publication; and I certainly thought he was going to stay longer. He has such good taste in literary matters. Gertrude, I wish you would go to Agatha, and tell her not to play any more this evening. She is an extraordinary girl. At times it is difficult to make her practise at all; and then, again, she never knows when to leave off."

With a glance at her lover, Gertrude left the room:

"My dear, keep Gertrude away for a few minutes. I want to speak to Mr. Whinstone," the Colonel went on, addressing his wife. Then turning to Whinstone, "I did not know that Robert intended going round to your house to-night."

"Well, I thought it just the time to look him up," the son began. "When one's friends are in trouble, you know——"

"Yes, yes; just so; that is, under ordinary circumstances; but I wish you had told me. Children are so inconsiderate—have so little sense of their duty nowadays."

"I am rather a large kid, pater," returned Robert, who was decidedly slangy.

"Robert, I dislike such expressions. Well, Mr. Whinstone, how are things really looking? There was a remand, of course?"

"Yes, Colonel," was the reply; the speaker assuming a calmness of demeanour he was far from feeling. "Of course it is difficult for me to see the matter exactly as an outsider does, or I should say that even a remand, so far as I am concerned, or anything else but a prompt dismissal of the charge, is absurd. But I suppose it was the wisest course for the coroner to take."

"Yes; I expect it was. It is a very serious charge."

Again there was an awkward silence. Frederick had been prepared to discuss the matter in all its bearings with the Colonel, as one deeply interested; but seeing how matters stood, his pride would not permit him to begin the discussion.

"Did your father tell you of the little talk we had together on the Exhibition Road?" the Colonel asked presently.

"He told me you had met; but little more. There has been no time."

"I should have thought he would have told you more. It would have been better, I venture to think, for you and for me, if he had. Robert, if you want to get on with your work, we won't keep you."

"Oh, I am in no hurry."

Whinstone felt what was coming, and he set his teeth hard. Robert leant against the mantelpiece, with his hands thrust deep in his trouser pockets.

The Colonel was something of a coward. He hesitated. Whinstone, determined not to help him in any way, remained silent.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Whinstone, I want to say something to you. I hope, and indeed think, your good sense will tell you I am right: I am rather surprised at your coming here this evening. I really am. As it was my painful duty to tell your father, and as I thought you would see for yourself—indeed, I understood from my wife that you had written to Miss Brunell to that effect—it will be better, much better, that you should not come here at present. It would be better for my daughter. You ought to think of that. I can't understand young men at all. You know it must be painful. It is not a question of your guilt or innocence. I trust there is no need to discuss that. You are aware that I never gave a very willing consent to your engagement."

"I told you it was through me Fred came to-night," put in Robert. "I made him come."

"I am afraid I did not require much making," said Whinstone. "Bob was kind enough to ask me to come, and I accepted his invitation because I did not think for a single moment that any friend of mine could believe me guilty of the absurd charge brought against me, and I fancied, as Bob has just said, that at such a time as this friends would rally round me. I see I was wrong. I am sorry."

"Just so, just so. I shall be glad to talk it over with you some time, and to give such advice as I can. But, you see, Whinstone, I am in a peculiar position. I am endeavouring in my humble way to lead men into the straight and narrow path; and I must keep from even the appearance of evil. Do not, however, imagine that I think you guilty. Such a thought would grieve me more than I can say; I could not talk to you as I am doing, if I thought so. But, you see, you are remanded. As to Gertrude—well, I am sure I need not say much on that head. You must see—your

note of to-day, I understand, proves that you see it—how awkward it is for her. I do hope you will make no further attempt to communicate with her at present.”

“Pardon me, Colonel, I must be guided by her wishes.”

“I am sorry to hear you answer in that way. You ought to be guided by what is good for her; and a man, as the stronger vessel, ought to endeavour to save a woman, even at the sacrifice of his own inclinations, from what is injurious to her. Such, at least, are my notions of what is right and proper. Her mother and I must talk to her: I have some work to do this evening. So sorry! There is no doubt but that all things which happen are for our good. Hope your father is keeping well. God bless you! Robert, you will see Mr. Whinstone out.”

A bitter reply rose to Frederick's lips; but for Gertrude's sake he repressed it. He felt it would be impossible to restrain his indignation if the interview were prolonged a moment longer; and with a slight inclination of the head, he accompanied Robert from the room.

“It is an infernal shame!” said that undutiful young man. “But, cheer up, old chap! Don't be down in the mouth! Gertrude is a brick! She's all right. I don't know where she is just now; but, if you like, I'll go and look.”

Whinstone shook his head, and with a grasp of the hand walked away.

CHAPTER XIV:

“She Was His Wife!”

MR FANE CAPELL was astonished and frightened, or rather amazed, annoyed, disgusted, vexed and alarmed; indeed, it is impossible by mere words to describe his state of mind. It almost seemed to him at times that all social law and order were coming to an end; that things were returning to a state of primeval chaos.

That his name, so honoured and respected hitherto, should be bandied about from mouth to mouth, that every vulgar tongue should be canvassing the doings of a member of his family, and uttering wild speculations, and much worse things, concerning her, was awful.

He had no very high opinion of the female intellect; he imagined most girls,

at any rate, to be vain and silly, to be capable of very few ideas beyond those connected with pleasure, fine clothes, and lovers; but it had never entered his head that a niece of his—his adopted daughter, who had enjoyed every advantage of education that could be given her, and who had had such opportunities of profiting by his companionship and precepts—would bring disgrace and ridicule on herself and on him as Adeliza had done. The most charitable conclusion to arrive at was that she had suddenly become a lunatic; and that was bad enough.

Where did she get her lunacy from? Madness was often hereditary, he thought; and all his family had been as sane as mortal beings could be; the male section men of the world who never had any ridiculous notions whatever, whose mental pabulum, indeed, had been chiefly works relating to business, stocks, and shares.

No long-haired poet, or sickly sentimentalist had ever issued from his side of the house. And, so far as he had heard, the family of Adeliza's mother had been much the same kind of people.

He was not inclined to attach importance to the suggestion that the foreign man and woman who had been in the church during the wedding ceremony had anything to do with Adeliza's flight. The brief interruption to the bridal ceremony had agitated her—had made her feel ill, and perhaps had had something to do with disturbing her mental equilibrium. But beyond that, the people themselves could have had nothing to do with her extraordinary conduct.

The Madame Lenoir to whom he had confided his niece in Paris was a most discreet person; he had received the highest possible references from her; her school was conducted on the most approved principles, and he had always heard that in France young girls were looked after much more strictly, and guarded from any intercourse with persons of the opposite sex, more rigidly than in England. Madame being in London it was but natural that she should go to see her old pupil married, and perhaps excusable that she should get a little excited thereby. Some women were so hysterical over weddings, as the Archdeacon had said.

The Frenchwoman Whinstone had seen had denied all knowledge of Adeliza's whereabouts, and if she were really the Madame Lenoir he had known that ought to

be sufficient: Moreover, his niece had left school three years, and during that time he did not think she had held any communication with Madame; and she had been under the constant supervision of himself and his wife.

As to the man who was said to have been with the old lady in the church, the most discreet of governesses might well be supposed to have a male friend or relative with her sometimes.

This reasoning was not, however, quite so conclusive to Mr. Capell's own mind as he could have wished it to be. Like many Englishmen, he in his heart rather despised and looked down upon foreigners generally, and especially, perhaps, the French people, both as a nation and as individuals.

He did not think, in his insular prejudice, that they were to be trusted very implicitly; and it was only because he, nevertheless, thought it conferred distinction upon a young person to be able to say that he or she had received the finishing touches of their education in Paris, that he had allowed Adeliza to go there. He had sent her somewhat against the will of his wife, and he was anxious to prove that he had not been wrong in this.

If not the outcome of actual madness, then this flight must have been brought about by reading some ridiculous romances, sentimental rubbish which turned girls' minds topsy-turvy. Why sentimental rubbish should make her commit an act which, considering that the marriage was a love match, was not particularly sentimental, he did not pause to consider.

The poor man's mind was in a state of confusion. At one moment he imagined that there must have been some quarrel between the newly-wedded pair in the carriage on their way from the church, although Wilgorton declared that such was not the case. Then the thought occurred to him that Adeliza had been reading some new woman nonsense; that she had heard something against Wilgorton's character, and had gone away in consequence.

But why had she married him at all? She could have heard nothing against him after going to church, unless Wilgorton himself had told her. But the chief questions were: Where was she? How could she be brought back, made to see reason, reconciled to her husband—and the matter hushed up?

Let it be repeated, Mr. Fane Capell was

a proud man. He was rich and was proud of that fact, and he was also proud of the honour and decorum with which everything connected with him had always been managed.

This marriage had been particularly pleasing to him: At times he could, in his own pompous way, pooh-pooh the claims of birth—his own was nothing to speak of—but in his secret heart he was delighted at the idea of being related to the titled aristocracy of England, of being able to speak of his nephew-in-law, the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton, and his nephew's brother, Viscount Clapham, with the more distant ducal connection.

And it had been a pleasant feature in the affair that no other favoured suitor had appeared upon the scene. Adeliza had confessed to her aunt that she truly loved Kenneth Wilgorton. What could be more satisfactory? And now the foolish girl (it is to be feared he used a stronger word) had spoilt everything, and brought shame and disgrace upon them all.

At first he imagined that in a few hours his niece, having upset all her friends as much as she could desire, would return, or, at least, they would hear where she was. Wilgorton had also disappeared, and, like Lady Clapham, Mr. Capell went so far as to openly assert that the newly-wedded couple were together again.

But when many hours passed without this being confirmed, when he heard of the murder of the Frenchman, the arrest of Whinstone, and that wild rumours were being circulated connecting these events in some way with Adeliza's marriage, he became desperate indeed.

He was startled to learn that the murdered man's name was Lenoir. He was not aware that the Madame Lenoir of his acquaintance had a son. He still resolutely refused to believe that these French people, whoever they were, had any connection with his own present trouble. He kept repeating that Adeliza had left school three years, and during that time had held no communication with her former governess.

He more than once declared his intention of seeking the aid of the police to discover his niece's retreat, if she did not quickly reappear; but fear of the increased publicity such a course would give deterred him.

His very pride and self-importance prevented him from taking any really decided course of action at first. Now, something must certainly be done. But what?

The suggestion had been made with bated breath that Adeliza might have committed suicide; but this ghastly idea did not trouble the Capells much: She had taken away a few jewels, and sufficient money to supply her wants for some time, which did not look like suicide. The money and jewels were strictly her own: Nothing in the shape of a wedding-present had been taken:

Mrs. Capell, to a great extent, shared her husband's thoughts and anxieties at this time. She had never shown any very marked affection for his beautiful niece, but she had always been kind to her in her own way; and she was now much disturbed and distressed. But she was one of those ladies, of whom there are many in the world, who always declare after the event that they had foreseen all along exactly what would happen: "I told you so," is the usual formula, and nothing can be much more irritating than this to the person addressed.

Mrs. Fane Capell was a discontented woman, with nothing to be discontented about. She possessed an abundance of the good things of this life. She was the envy of all her friends. She had the command of money; she had a fine house, carriages, horses and servants, and a husband, whom, in spite of his self-assertion and pomposity, she could manage very well if she tried.

But, notwithstanding all these material advantages, she was not happy. The old fable of the crumpled rose-leaf received an exemplification in her, though what her crumpled rose-leaf was it would be difficult to say, unless it was her own unhappy disposition. She would, perhaps, have been happier as a charwoman than as a fine lady.

A good gossip with the cook in the kitchen occasionally would probably have brought her some comfort, could she have indulged in it: A real grievance, if not of too serious a nature, was something of a god-send to her. In the present instance, however, Fate was carrying things too far.

"She ought not to have gone to Paris: I said it at the time, and I say it now!" she exclaimed to her husband. She referred, of course, to Adeliza, of whom they were talking:

"Excuse me, Fanny, you said nothing of the kind," replied Mr. Capell irritably: "You may have seen objections; but, for all that, you agreed that for a girl of Adeliza's position and expectations it was the right thing to do."

"I am not telling the truth, then, Mrs. Capell: That's pleasant hearing, I'm sure."

"My dear Fanny, we have trouble enough——"

"I didn't say we had not trouble enough: I can tell you I feel it. But I knew we should have trouble!"

"Don't be absurd! How could you possibly know?"

"Oh, I'm not blind, if you are: A girl of Adeliza's temperament ought to have been kept at home under our own eyes, instead of being sent abroad to imbibe a lot of French notions. Women can usually see things, while men are as blind as bats."

"Fanny!"

"Didn't I say I could never trust Frenchmen, with their nasty, ridiculous ways—kissing each other, and so on? I don't like foreigners at all; but Frenchmen—why, there!"

"This is beneath you, Fanny: It is insular prejudice. You may have——"

"Didn't I say so?"

"My dear, allow me to speak. I will speak! You forget yourself—interrupting in this way. I was about to observe that you may have expressed your disapproval of the manners and customs, even of the morals, of Frenchmen. But you, nevertheless, agreed with me that a Parisian school was a proper place for Adeliza: And you were speaking of French *men*: She was confided to the care of a French lady, who had had the training of many young ladies of importance."

"Oh! French women are worse than French men—nasty, palavering, deceitful things!"

"Prejudice, Fanny, prejudice: But what has her going to school in Paris to do with all this? And what is the good of talking about it? I don't believe all the scandalous twaddle which gets circulated, and which actually finds its way into the newspapers: How should newspaper people know everything? Half the newspapers ought to be suppressed, and the editors imprisoned: The more highly respectable and important one's position is, the more one is subject to these attacks."

"Oh, yes, I daresay: I don't mean to say she was mixed up with this Frenchman who has got killed. Heaven forbid that it should be so! It would be too dreadful! But I do mean that at that school she doubtless had silly notions put into her head; and these, together with the absurd ideas which are flying about England—set afloat

by idiotic Americans—women wearing men's clothes, and one piece of foolery and another—have upset her. Girls haven't the sense they used to have. And then, this marriage—"

"For Heaven's sake, Fanny, don't say anything against the marriage! It was a most desirable connection."

"I am not so sure that it was. I know where the real advantages come in—who, if all had been well, had the best of the bargain. These Wilgortons, with all their pride, are as poor as church mice. They were glad of the connection, if you like. And then Lady Clapham had the impudence to glare at me, and make disparaging remarks. And we have the money! The idea!"

"Very annoying, indeed, I must admit. But it was Adeliza's wish to be married to him: She wasn't forced. And Lady Clapham was naturally much disgusted and excited. Women are so excitable, and, of course, she feels this."

"And that Whinstone—" began Mrs. Capell:

"He did very wrong to go to that house—to those people—without first consulting me," interrupted Mr. Capell. "It is that which has caused these last frightful rumours. His intentions were good; but he was too officious. And he has got himself arrested for his pains. It is appalling! simply appalling! What will be the end of it?"

"And then he came here, and said something which made Mr. Wilgorton go off white as a sheet, and with a pistol in his pocket. I wonder they haven't arrested him."

"Good Heavens, Fanny!"

"Why, you saw it yourself, and said he would shoot himself or somebody else."

"Heavens! you must not say that!"

"Of course I shall not say it elsewhere; but it is the truth!"

At this moment a servant entered, and informed Mr. and Mrs. Capell that a lady, who declined to give her name, wished particularly to see them: Neither felt in a condition to receive an ordinary visitor; but in their present state of agitated expectancy they thought it well to closely question the servant:

"You know, Mullins, I never see persons who refuse to send up their names. Do you think it is anyone asking for a subscription?" said the merchant:

"What is she like, Mullins?" inquired his wife:

"She is an elderly person, ma'am, and very urgent to see you. I don't think, if I may say so, she is quite right in the upper storey—excuse me, sir and ma'am, I mean—"

"You mean she is not quite right in her head," said Mrs. Capell. "What makes you think so?"

"She is excited like, ma'am. She gives me quite a turn; and I don't think she's English, neither."

Mr. and Mrs. Capell looked at each other; but before they could say another word a lady, short in stature, dressed in black, and closely veiled, entered the room. Mullins gave a half-frightened glance at her and fled. With a quick, excited, jerky movement, she threw back her veil, disclosing the pale, haggard face of an old woman, with sharp features and restless, black eyes—eyes which seemed to blaze with a sort of frenzy: Her hair, which was but sparsely streaked with grey, was disheveled, and added to her wild appearance. She advanced rapidly to the centre of the room; then suddenly throwing out her arms said, in a shrill voice, and with a foreign accent:

"You remember me not, Monsieur Capell? I know you."

"Madame Lenoir!" he exclaimed:

"*Oui, oui, hélas!* Madame Lenoir, monsieur!"

"My dear, this is the preceptress under whose care Adeliza was placed in Paris," he explained, with considerable uneasiness in his tones. "Madame, Mrs. Capell."

His wife had never before met the French governess. Mr. Capell had himself transacted all the business connected with his niece's sojourn in France.

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* That we never had seen your Adeliza!" cried the Frenchwoman, with wild gestures:

Her hearers, already startled, were now alarmed:

"What do you mean, Madame Lenoir?" demanded Mr. Capell. "I cannot understand you. This is really unbecoming talk. And please speak in English."

"Good Heavens, the woman is mad!" cried his wife, stretching out her hand towards the bell. "I knew there was something wrong."

"Oh, I am mad, am I? So! Yes, yes, in English will I speak. I know English: And I will speak, madame, if you ring all the bells in the world; and more unbecoming yet will I be, monsieur! For I curse the day when first I saw your niece, with her

pretty face! And I curse her! That is English! Why?—why do I curse her? Because they have killed my son! Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Victor, mon fils!*”

Her voice gradually rose to a shriek as she finished speaking. Mrs. Capell's hand had left the bell-rope without ringing:

“Killed your son! Who has killed your son? I did not know you had a son. And what has Adeliza to do with this son?” gasped Mr. Capell.

“Yes, yes, yes, *grand Dieu!* they have killed him for the sake of your niece, with her pretty, false face! Oh, curse her! curse her! curse her! Oh, yes, I can do it in English! I will spoil her beauty! I will tear her limb from limb! That is English! And the women of France can do these things!”

“Don't ring, Fanny,” said Mr. Capell to his wife. “We must know more of this. Is all the world gone mad? Madame Lenoir, you must explain yourself. We do not know what—what you mean. What has this son of yours to do with our niece?”

“She thought to make a great marriage here in England; that what is past would never be known,” the Frenchwoman continued, paying no heed to his questions. “She would be a great lady. Oh, yes! So much for the great marriage! So much for *le contrat de mariage!* Bah!”

She snatched a paper from her pocket, furiously tore it into several pieces, and, casting them on the floor, stamped upon them.

“I—I never knew anything like this in all my life!” said Mr. Capell, stuttering in his alarm and indignation. “Is Bedlam let loose? Will you, or will you not, woman, tell us what you mean? What is this paper? What has my niece to do with your son?”

“What has she to do with my son? Oh, yes, you shall know that!”

She advanced a step or two nearer to Mr. Capell, and so wild was her appearance that he drew back in terror. His wife kept close behind him. Madame Lenoir continued to advance, and with her yellow face nearly touching his, and her eyes literally blazing with excitement, hissed:

“What has she to do with my son, ask you? She has much to do with him! You are proud! You are *pompeux!* But what care I for that? *Rien de tout!* Not that! not that!”

She snapped her fingers very near to the horrified merchant's nose.

“Woman, woman, madame, this is too much!” he stuttered. “I—I—really must ring the bell for the servants to show you out. It—it—it is simply atrocious!”

“I always said foreigners were mad. But we must know what she is driving at: Make her speak—make her tell us!” cried Mrs. Capell.

The lady had placed a heavy chair between herself and the visitor. She was alarmed; but she had no thought now of summoning the servants. At first red with indignation, both she and her husband grew pale with dread. The woman might be mad; but there was method in her madness. Surely some dreadful revelation was about to be made.

“I am mad, am I? Yes, yes, I am mad! All the world is mad, except you! And mad would you not be if your only son was killed—murdered? But the English are pigs. They feel nothing. Oh, the assassins! You say you must ring for your servants. *Sonnez! sonnez! sonnez!* Let them all come, and hear what I have to say: What care I for that? Will you ring, as you call it? Will you have all the house, all the street, *tout le monde*, in the room?”

The woman was undoubtedly insane—at any rate, mad with excitement; but there was, nevertheless, meaning in her words: Mr. and Mrs. Capell looked at each other in increasing terror. The merchant himself instinctively made a movement towards the bell; but Madame Lenoir sprang forward, seized his arm, and putting her yellow face and frenzied eyes close to his face, almost shrieked:

“I will tell you what my son had to do with your niece. You brought her to me, to learn what you call accomplishments, which you cannot get here in England. She was to be, taken much care of. She was not to speak to such and such people: She was one by herself. Oh, yes, yes, yes, I took great care. I kept her from people: But I knew she would have much money—much money. Why should we not share it? I like money. Victor, oh, *mon Dieu!* liked money. Who does not? What is the world without it? And she was *très belle*. She pleased him; and he was handsome, my son. I married her to him! She was his wife! That is what my son had to do with your niece! Do you comprehend? You stand like—like stuck pigs! Are you struck so? She was his wife!”

CHAPTER XV.

An Amazing Marriage.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the wild words with which Madame Lenoir had preluded her last most startling assertion, Mr. and Mrs. Capell were not prepared for such a revelation; and had a thunderbolt exploded in their drawing-room they could scarcely have been more amazed, more horror-stricken. They had been assailed by vague fears in plenty; but, somehow, this had not occurred to them.

Mr. Capell was especially moved. His amazement, anger, and indignation had been gathering force for some time; now these feelings reached their climax. His face became absolutely purple. He looked on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

His perceptive faculties were not very keen. He was, however, prepared to hear Madame Lenoir declare—and this would have been shock enough—that there had been love passages between her son and Adeliza. The man might have been madly jealous; Adeliza might have been frightened at the thought of the truth becoming known. But that she should have married him, and concealed the fact all this time—that was beyond conception. The three glared at each other like wild animals.

The Frenchwoman might be raving mad. There was the fierce light of unrestrained excitement, or of insanity, in her eyes. As she stood there, with her head bent forward, and her hand stretched out, she looked like some ancient sybil pronouncing vengeance, and gloating, even while herself struck by the horror of it, over the terror she caused. But, nevertheless, her words carried conviction. They both felt that she was speaking the truth.

And if the truth, what appalling consequences followed? Not only was the fabric of pride and gratified ambition which had been reared on the marriage of their niece shattered, thrown to the ground; but that niece, of whose beauty and accomplishments they had been so proud, had deliberately committed bigamy, and was liable to be brought, like any common criminal, before a court of law to answer for the offence.

And over this lurked a still more awful shadow—the shadow of the crime of crimes—the crime which the most hardened regard with awe and terror—the crime of murder! The man who, as this woman asserted with such an air of truth, had

married their niece, was dead; but he had died no natural death. By whom had he been done to death?

Whinstone had been arrested; but it was not likely that he had done the deed. Their thoughts at once went back to Wilgorton. A dread fear, almost a conviction, seized them as they recalled the wrong he had suffered, his wild looks, and the pistol he had carried on the night of the supposed murder.

For the time, the fact that the deed might still have been done by an outsider—someone totally unconnected with them and theirs—did not occur to them. The clouds about them seemed too thick for that ray of hope to pierce through.

Perhaps Wilgorton's vengeance had not stopped even at the death of the Frenchman. Adeliza was still missing. Perhaps she was murdered, too! Horror and fear and sickening dread took possession of them both.

Now that Madame Lenoir had spoken out, Mr. Capell's powers of perception seemed quickened; and all the consequences, the dreadful possibilities, attendant on the woman's statement, flashed rapidly through his mind.

Mrs. Capell was the more self-possessed of the two; but all the usual, discontented querulousness had gone out of her voice, as she exclaimed:

"Woman, I do not believe it! How can you!"

"Woman!" shrieked Madame Lenoir. "Oh, yes, I am a woman. Are you a woman? You do not believe it! We shall see!"

Mr. Capell began to recover himself somewhat. He pulled himself together, as it were, and, encouraged by his wife's words, endeavoured to carry off the matter with something of his usual pompous bluster.

"It is false! It is not true! It is a base fabrication!" he said. "How dare you come here with such a tale? You dared not have done it! The girl was under age. It would not have been legal—this—this marriage!"

"*Je n'oserais!* I dare not!" cried the Frenchwoman, snapping her fingers contemptuously. "Oh, yes, Monsieur Fane Capell, we dared do that, and much more!"

"Where are the proofs? We must see the proofs!"

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, you can see what you call the proofs!"

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, woman?" said Mr. Capell, with some dignity. "When we confided our niece to your care—placed her in your establishment—we trusted in your honour."

"Foreigners have no honour!" cried his wife. "I always said so; and whether her tale be true or false, this proves it."

"It was your bounden duty," he continued, "to shield all the young ladies committed to your care from intercourse with—from anything of the kind; and especially from the attentions of your own son. You never told me you had a son."

"My son! yes, my son! No; I have no son! Oh, *grand Dieu!* he is murdered for her!" exclaimed Madame Lenoir, with a sudden burst of violent weeping.

Her grief was so real, so intense, so awful, that even they, irritated as they were, felt appalled by it, and they looked on in softened silence until the violence of her emotion had somewhat subsided.

"You must explain yourself," Mr. Capell said. "You make most extraordinary statements, and you make extraordinary and dreadful charges. We do not understand you, and can only hope that you scarcely understand yourself. If you persist in what you say, we have a right to demand proofs. Calm yourself! You are unduly excited. This will never do: Tell us as briefly and quietly as you can what you mean. I must insist upon it."

"Oh, yes, monsieur and madame, I will explain, because I choose to do so. Not because you insist. What care I for your insistence, as you call it? Nothing do I care for now. This is how it was. I saw that you were prude—prudish, as they say—when I first had the interview with you. I wanted your niece in my establishment; and why should I rob myself by saying I had a handsome son—*hélas!*—coming home? Your niece was *très belle*—beautiful—oh, I acknowledge that!—and she was *romantique*. Can you alter a girl's mind? Ah, no! My Victor was *galant*—*un vert galant*—handsome, as you say—" There was another burst of sobs. "He could attract any girl. They could not resist him. So! so! They met—at first perhaps by chance—perhaps I arranged it. And I saw what would happen. Did I try, try—*éloigner l'un de l'autre*—to separate them? Why should I? Tell me that!"

She paused a moment. Mr. Capell glared at her. His wife made a gesture of resigned

disgust—a gesture which, despite her agitation, plainly said: "I told you so!"

"She had money. Among the rich English *demoiselles* she was rich, or would be some day. Why not he, who had none, share her riches? *Certainement*, he was good-looking—my Victor—an *éligible parti*, in that way, for her. Better he than another—some stupid Englishman. It went on; they were with each other pleased; and when the right time came Victor urged a secret marriage. For this I worked, too. Why not, monsieur and madame? You would not have consented. Bah! what was your consent, when it was done? She was not your daughter. We do without your consent."

"Of all the barefaced impudence I ever heard of," began Mrs. Capell, while her husband continued to glare in speechless astonishment and indignation. Madame Lenoir paid no heed, and continued:

"She wept a little—your niece—but her scruples were overcome. Of course they were. The marriage was celebrated by an English priest—what you call a clergyman—in Paris. An English clergyman, mark you! Oh, he was not too particular, this good English priest, so that he was paid. He asked no questions. But it will hold good—this marriage. We said it will be better to keep it a secret until she is twenty-one years, when, at least, she will have her own money. If you, Monsieur Capell, died in the meantime, she would have your money."

"Well!—"

"I always said they were lost to every sense of decency and right feeling. But this is beyond—"

"You can tell me this to my face, Madame Lenoir!"

"If you did not die before she was twenty-one, monsieur, you perhaps forgive her, your fair niece, and the money come all the same. If you did not forgive her, she have her own money. They were happy for a time. But Victor, *pauvre garçon!* was, *hélas!* *un coureur*—what you call a rover. He could not remain long at home. He wished to see the world. He went to Corsica. For a long, long time we heard not of him. Your Adeliza was at home with you. I could not keep her longer when you wanted her. Then it was said that he died—was killed in a duel in Corsica."

"Oh, *ciel!* Oh, *grand Dieu!* how I suffered! You cold English cannot know how I suffered. She was here with you. I know not what she felt. Perhaps she

was glad. She sent me a little money—oh, we had means of corresponding—she was frightened, and she begged of me to keep quiet. I kept silence—there was no good in telling then; but I suffered. Many weary months passed, and then, one day—shall I ever forget it?—no, no, I never shall—he came back alive. He had been wounded in Corsica—he had been ill a long time—he had been in prison in Corsica. He had wandered about. He had not thought of his mother or of his wife until he wanted money. Young men do not think:

“Adeliza was twenty-one years. We say to ourselves: ‘We will go to England, we will see what she is doing. We will surprise her. Victor shall, if need be, claim his *épousée*—his wife. A little *vacarme*—what you call row—and all, perhaps, would be well.’ We in the evening arrived in England. What do we hear in London? Miss Fane Capell—so they call her—is to marry Milord Wilgorton in the morning; and she the *épousée* of Victor. What think you of that, you English saints?”

“She thought he was dead,” said Mrs. Capell.

“Yes; thank Heaven, at least, for that! She must have thought so!” ejaculated Mr. Capell.

“So! She thought he was dead, and what she had done at school would never be known,” Madame Lenoir went on. “She thought a little money and the fear of what might happen would keep me quiet. As to the clergyman—‘Bah!’ she say, ‘what of him? He is gone—we know not where. He is dead, perhaps. The other pupils at the school know nothing.’ She would make a grand marriage. And she loved this—what you call, Honourable Wilgorton. I saw that when I watched her in the church. *Perfide!*”

“If all this is true—and, mind, madame, I do not take your word altogether—why did you not stop the marriage?”

“Oh, it is awful! but you can never get to the bottom of a foreigner. I always said so!” interjected his wife.

“I am *impulsive!* I would, *sur le champ*, have ended the matter; but Victor—he say: ‘No! Let us see how she will carry it on: We will go to the church, and then, perhaps.’ We went to the church. The pig of a sacristan would keep us out. But, no, no, we went in. We saw you all—a fine sight! Ah, the bride! she was *magnifique* in her satin and jewels—different—oh, so different—from the girl in the white frock

and the beads of coral who married Victor. I could have screamed out: You see, I am *impulsive!* But, no, no; Victor would wait.”

“What could the man mean by such conduct? It was diabolical to wait until we got to the church! And then to wait afterwards! You were both mad together!” cried Mr. Capell.

“He is dead! My son is dead! Perhaps he wanted to punish the perfidious one all the more by waiting until her triumph was complete; and perhaps he cared not for her now—he had seen many as fair as she—but only for the money she would give for silence. Why should he not change as well as she? Oh! I care not what you think: Oh, you could kill me where I stand! Kill me! kill me, as my son was killed!”

Her voice ended in a sort of yell, which almost curdled the blood in the veins of her hearers. Mr. Capell, somewhat more composed now, was anxious to hear the rest of the woman’s story, and he and his wife remained silent until she went on again:

“I could not keep quiet—I did not understand his intentions—and Victor drew me from the church. We stood outside among the people: We saw you all come out, and the bride—she saw us. Oh, we could have laughed. Her dress was not whiter than her face. She knew then, as you English say, it was all up. We followed the carriages and watched at your door. We saw her come from the house like, like—*une voleuse*—a thief. Followed her we did. Once we lost her in the many streets; but we found her again. Then there was a scene; ah! you may think there was a scene. The people began to come, to assemble. We went to the house where we were staying: We made her go, likewise, in order to talk without all the people listening: Victor offered her that she should go back to Milord Wilgorton—the Honourable, you call him—and she should pay us money: Was it not fair? She would have what she wanted, and we would have what we wanted.”

Madame Lenoir paused, as if expecting a reply to her question: There was no answer, and, shrugging her shoulders, she continued:

“She did weep and moan; but she would not consent. She was a fool, and worse! She might have been in all her glory now, as you say, and only a little money to pay. Bad principle, you tell me; but what is principle to murder? Yes, monsieur and madame, murder! Oh, *ciel!* murder! I

left them to talk, talk—my son wished me to leave them—and I went out a little while. When I went back a gentleman—one of your friends—he came inquiring about her. He had spoken with me in the street because I had lost my way, and he followed me. I made mock of him; but she was in the house all the time. I sent him away. We did not wish her seen then; and she was herself afraid.

"When he was gone we talked again; we wanted to make her promise what she would do, before we let her go. At last we let her go away—we could not keep her because of the people of the house—and Victor, he followed her. *Hélas! hélas!* I looked out of the window, and what did I see?—a man go after Victor. I told your *magistrat* it was that friend of yours—the friend who came—that Whinstone—so he is called. But now I say it was not he. It was that Milord Wilgorton; and he and Adeliza, your niece—murdered my son!"

Her face twitched convulsively, and again she paused a moment, and in that pause the ticking of the gilded clock on the mantelpiece could be heard distinctly. Mr. and Mrs. Capell stood like statues. For a time bereft of his pomposity, the wealthy merchant looked like a rather flabby, weak old man; while Mrs. Capell had a decidedly worn and faded appearance. So overcome were they that they did not at once resent the awful accusation of complicity in murder brought against their niece. Suddenly, in a high, shrill voice, madame resumed:

"But I will be avenged! I will be avenged! *Mon Dieu tout puissant!* I will! They hang for murder here in

England; and they shall hang. Her white neck shall be stretched!"

She made a gesture, horrible in connection with her words, of stretching something:

"Beware, woman!" exclaimed Mr. Capell, his anger and indignation getting the better of his dread. "Beware, Madame Lenoir, there is also a law in England against slander; and you are placing yourself in the power of that law. You cannot with impunity go about accusing first one person and then another of crimes. The Honourable Mr. Wilgorton is a gentleman of position—high position," he went on, feebly; "and my niece is——" He faltered.

"Your niece is a *bigame* and a murderess! Go to the law! Let her go to the law! She is in hiding; but she will be found! And your Honourable Milord Wilgorton is hiding; and he will be found! Oh, yes; they shall be found! As for me, what care I for your threats and your talk of the law? You dare not stir hand or foot—you! I went to the church, and before the eyes of the fool of a sacristan, I took *le contrat de mariage* from the book. That is against your law. The man tried to stop me; but I laughed in his face. And in your face I laugh, imbecile! There is *le contrat de mariage*; and I do this!"

She stamped her foot upon the pieces of paper still upon the floor. Then, without another word, she threw up her hands with a gesture of wild despair, and uttering a fearful cry—a cry which rang in their ears long afterwards—turned and quitted the room, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Capell staring at each other in blank dismay.

They were both perfectly aghast:

(Interest in the story increases largely next month.)

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

A boy sat up in an apple-tree,
Eating the fruit right merrilee;
The apples were green, but what cared he?
He couldn't wait till they ripened, you see:
(Now this seems foolish to you and me.
But perhaps there once was a time when we
Were as fond of apples as boys can be!
And forgot that we'd learnt at our mother's
knee
That apple-stealing is larcenee.)

But let me return to the strange stores
Of the boy who ate from half-past three
Until it was time to go home to tea;
And still no farmer appeared, strangelee,
With dog or gun to make him flee;
And the apples agreed with him famouslee,
So he had no occasion to call an M.D.
To rob him of his £ s. d.
And that's why I think you'll all agree
That this tale's out of the ordinaree.

The Soul of a Man.

We regret that owing to a misunderstanding we changed the title of "The Journal of Arthur Stirling" to "The Soul of a Man," and advertised the story under that title. As will be seen in the following pages the story now appears under its original title,

**"THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR
STIRLING."**

The Journal of Arthur Stirling.

By UPTON SINCLAIR.

(Author of "THE JUNGLE.")

Mr. Sinclair's career has not always been a successful one, and in "The Soul of a Man," which is a living document throbbing with emotion in every line, he portrays in vivid and realistic language the bitterness of his existence during the time that he was numbered among the "great unpublished." In this tragic life-story, originally written under the title "The Journal of Arthur Stirling," Mr. Sinclair pictures his daily mental and physical tortures amid altogether uncongenial surroundings.

READER:

I do not know if "The Valley of the Shadow" means to you what it means to me; I do not know if it means anything at all to you. But I have sought long and far for these words, to utter an all but unutterable thought.

When you walk in the forest you do not count the lives that you tread into nothingness: When you rejoice with the Spring-time you do not hear the cries of the young things that are choked and beaten down and dying. When you watch the wild thing in your snare you do not know the meaning of the torn limbs, and the throbbing heart, and the awful silence of the creature trapped. When you go where the poor live, and see thin faces and hungry eyes and crouching limbs, you do not think of these things either.

But I, reader—I dwell in the Valley of the Shadow.

Sometimes it is silent in my Valley, and the creatures sit in terror of their own voices; sometimes there are screams that pierce the sky; but there is never any answer in my Valley. There are quivering hands there, and racked limbs, and aching hearts, and panting souls. There is gasping struggle, glaring failure—maniac despair. For over my Valley rolls *The Shadow*, a giant thing, moving with the weight of mountains. And you stare at it, you feel it; you scream, you pray, you weep; you hold up your hands to your God, you grow mad; but the Shadow moves like Time, like the sun, and the planets in the sky. It rolls over you, and it rolls on; and then you cry out no more.

It is that way in my Valley. The Shadow is the Shadow of Death.

PART I:—

Writing a Poem:

THE book! The book! This day, Saturday, the sixth day of April, 1901, I begin the book!

I have never kept a journal—I have been too busy living; but to-day I begin a journal. I am so built that I can do but one thing at a time. Now that I have begun *The Captive*, I must be haunted with it all day; when I am not writing it I must be dreaming it, or restless because I am not. Therefore it occurred to me that in the hours of weariness I would write about it what was in my mind—what fears and what hopes; why and how I write it will be a story in itself, and some day I think it will be read.

I have come to the last stage of the fight, and I see the goal. I will tell the story, and by-and-by wise editors can print it in the Appendix!

Yesterday I was a cable-car conductor, and to-day I am a poet!

I know of some immortal poems that were written by a druggist's clerk, and some by a gauger of liquid barrels, but none by a cable-car conductor. "It sounds interesting, tell us about it!" says the reader. I shall, but not to-day.

To-day I begin the book!

April 10th:

I have been for four days in a kind of frenzy. I have come down like a collapsed balloon, and I think I have had enough for once.

I have written the opening scene, but not finally; and then I got into the middle—I could not help it. How in God's name

I am ever to do this fearful thing, I don't know ; it frightens me, and sometimes I lose all heart.

I suppose I shall have to begin again to-night. I must eat something first, though. That is one of my handicaps : I wear myself out and have to stop and eat. Will anybody ever love me for this work, will anybody ever understand it ?

I suppose I can get back where I was yesterday, but always it grows harder, and more stern. I set my teeth together.

It was like the bursting of an overstrained dam, these last four days. How long I have been pent up—eighteen months ! And eighteen months seems like a lifetime to me. I have been a bloodhound in the leash, hungering—hungering for this thing, and the longing has piled up in me day by day. Sometimes it has been more than I could bear ; and when the time was near, I was so wild that I was sick. The book ! The book ! Freedom and the book !

And last Saturday I went out of the hell-house where I have been pent so long, and I covered my face with my hands and fled away home—away to the little corner that is mine. There I flung myself down and sobbed like a child. It was relief—it was joy—it was fear ! It was everything ! The book ! The book ! Then I got up—and the world seemed to go behind me, and I was drunk. I heard a voice calling—it thundered in my ears—that I was free—that my hour was come—that I might live—that I might live—live ! And I could have shouted it—I know that I laughed it aloud. Every time I thought the thought it was like the throbbing of wings to me—“Free ! Free !”

No one can understand this—no one who has not a demon in his soul. No one who does not know how I have been choked—what horrors I have borne.

I am through with that—I did not think of that. I am free ! They will never have me back.

That motive alone would drive me to my work, would make me dare *anything*. But I do not need that motive.

I wrote this, and then I leant back, tired out.

April 13th:

A cable-car conductor and a poet ! I think that will be a story worth telling.

I have tried many and various occupations, but I have not found one so favourable to the study of poetry as my last. I

should have made out very well—if I had not been haunted by *The Captive*.

With everything else you do you are more or less hampered by having to sell your brain ; and also by having to obey someone. But a cable-car is an unlimited monarchy ; and all you have to do is to collect fares and pull the bell, both of which duties are quite mechanical. And beside that you receive princely wages—and can live off one-third of them, if you know how ; and that means that you need only work one-third of the time, and can write your poetry the rest of it !

This sounds like jesting, but it is not. I have only been a cable-car conductor six months, but in that time I have taught myself to read Greek with more than fluency. All you need is good health and spirits, a will of iron, and a very tiny note-book in the palm of your hand, full of the words you wish to learn.

And then when you get home late at night, are there not the great masters who love you ?

April 16th:

I was thinking to-day that *The Captive* would be an interesting document to students of style. Read it, and make up your mind about it ; then I will tell you—the first line of it is almost the first line of blank verse I ever wrote in my life.

All my soul has been centred upon *living*. Since this book first took hold of me—eighteen months ago—I could not tell with what terrible intensity I have lived it. They said to me : “You are a poet ; why don't you write verses for the magazines ?” But I was not a writer of verses for the magazines.

April 19th:

I saw my soul to-day: It was a bubble, blown large, palpitating, whirling over a stormy sea ; glorious with the rainbow hues it was, but perilous, abandoned.—Do you catch the *feeling* of my soul ?

Something perilous—I do not much care what. A traveler scaling the mountains, leaping upon dizzy heights ; a gambler staking his fortune, his freedom, his life—upon a cast !

I will tell you about it:

It began when I was fifteen: My great-uncle, my guardian, is a wholesale grocer in Chicago ; he has a large palace and a large waistcoat.

“Will you be a wholesale grocer ?” said he:

"No," said I, "I will not."

I might have been a partner by this time, had I said yes, and had a palace and a large waistcoat, too.

"Then what will you be?" asked the great-uncle.

"I will be a poet," said I.

"You mean you will be a loafer?" said he.

"Yes," said I—disliking argument—"I will be a loafer."

And so I went away, and while I went I was thinking, far down in my soul. And I said: "It must be everything or nothing; either I am a poet or I am not. I will act as if I were; I will burn my bridges behind me. If I am, I will win—for you cannot kill a poet; and if I am not, I will die."

Thus is it perilous.

I fight the fight with all my soul; I give every ounce of my strength, my will, my hope to the making of myself a poet. And when the time comes I write my poem. Then if I win, I win empires; and if I lose—

"You put all your eggs into one basket," someone once said to me.

"Yes," I replied, "I put all my eggs into one basket—and then I carry the basket myself."

Now I have come to the last stage of the journey—the "one fight more, and the last." And can I give any idea of what is back of me, to nerve me to that fight? I will try to tell you.

For seven years I have borne poverty and meanness, sickness, heat, cold, toil—that I might make myself an artist. The indignities, the degradations—I could not tell them, if I spent all the time I have in writing a journal. I have lived in garrets—among dirty people—vulgar people—vile people; I have worn rags and unclean things; I have lived upon bread and water and things that I have cooked myself; I have seen my time and my strength wasted by a thousand hateful impertinences—I have been driven half mad with pain and rage; I have gone without friends—I have been hated by everyone; I have worked at all kinds of vile drudgery—or starved myself sick that I might avoid working.

But I have said: "I will be an artist!"

Day and night I have dreamt it; day and night I have fought for it. I have plotted and planned—I have plotted to save a minute. I have done menial work that I might have my brain free—all the languages that I know I have worked at at such times. I have calculated the cost of foods—I have

lived on a third of the pittance I earned, that I might save two-thirds of my time. I once washed dishes in a filthy restaurant because that took only two or three hours a day.

I have said: "I will be an artist! I will fix my eyes upon the goal; I will watch and wait, and fight the fight day by day. And when at last I am strong, and when my message is ripe, I will earn myself a free chance, and then I will write a book. All the yearning, all the agony of this my life I will put into it; every hour of trial, every burst of rage. I will make it the hope of my life, I will write it with my blood—give every ounce of strength that I have and every dollar that I own; and I will win—I will win!"

"So I will be free, and the horror will be over."

I have done that—I am doing that now. I mean to finish it if it kills me.

But I was sitting on the edge of the bed to-night, and the tears came into my eyes and I whispered: "But, oh, you must not ask me to do any more! I cannot do any more! It will leave me broken!"

Only so much weight can a man carry. The next pound breaks his back.

April 22nd.

I am happy to-night; I am a little bit drunk.

To-day was one day in fifty. Why should it be? Sometimes I have but to spread my wings to the wind. Yesterday I might have torn my hair out, and that glory would not have come to me. But to-day I was filled with it—it lived in me and burnt in me—I had but to go on and go on.

The Captive! It was the burst of rage—the first glow in the ashes of despair. I was walking up and down the room for an hour, thundering it to myself. I have not gotten over the joy of it yet: "*Thou in thy mailed insolence!*"

I wonder if anyone who reads those thirty lines will realise that they meant eight hours of furious toil on my part!

April 25th.

Would you like to know where I am, and how I am doing all these things? I am in a lodging-house. I have one of three hall rooms in a kind of top half-storey. There is room for me to take four steps; so it is that I "walk up and down" when I am excited. I have tried—I have not kept count of how many places—and this is

the quietest. The landlady's husband has a carpenter's shop downstairs, but he is always drunk and doesn't work; it has also been providentially arranged that the daughter, who sings, is sick for some time. Next door to me there is a man who plays the 'cello in a dance hall until I know not what hour of the night. He keeps his 'cello at the dance hall. Next to him is a pale woman who sits and sews all day and waits for her drunken husband to come home. In front there is some kind of foolish girl who leaves her door open in the hope that I'll look in at her, and a couple of inoffensive people not worth describing.

I get up—I never know the time in the morning; and sometimes I lie without moving for hours—thinking—thinking. Or sometimes I go out and roam around the streets; or sit perfectly motionless, gazing at the wall. When it will not come, I make it. I breakfast on bread and milk, and I eat bread and milk at all hours of the day when I am hungry. For dinner I cook a piece of meat on a little oil-stove, and for supper I eat bread and milk. The rest of the time I am sitting on the floor by the window, writing; or perhaps kneeling by the bed with my head buried in my arms, and thinking until the room reels. When I am not doing that I wander around like a lost soul; I cannot think of anything else. Sometimes when I am tired and must rest I force myself to sit down and write some of this.

I have just forty dollars now. It costs me three dollars a week, not including paper and typewriting. Thus I have ten or twelve weeks in which to finish *The Captive*—that many and no more.

If I am not finished by that time it will kill me; to try to work and earn money in the state that I am in just at present would turn me into a maniac—I should kill someone, I know.

I am quivering with nervous tension—every faculty strained to breaking; the buzz of a fly is a roar to me. I build up these towering castles of emotion in my soul, castles that shimmer in the sunlight:

Banners yellow, glorious, golden!

And then something happens, and they fall upon me with the weight of mountains:

Ten weeks! And yet it is not that which goads me most.

What goads me most is that I am a captive in a dungeon and am fighting for the life of my soul.

I shall win. I do not fear—the fountains of my being will not fail me. I saw my soul a second time to-day; it was no longer the bubble, blown large, palpitating. It was a bird resting upon a bough. The bough was tossed and flung about by a tempest; and a chasm yawned below; but the bough held, and the bird was master of its wings, and sang.

The name of the bough was Faith:

There are ten characters in *The Captive*: a tyrant, two slaves, six guests and a man. There are two scenes—a dungeon, and a banquet-hall.

A tyrant: I understand by a tyrant a man whose happiness is the unhappiness of others. I read of the discoveries of Mexico, and how they found a pyramid of human skulls, raised as a monument; that has been to me, ever since, the type of tyranny. The forms of tyranny vary through the ages, but the principle is always the same; a tyrant is a man who is made great by the toil and sorrow of others.

The slave also remains the same through all time; and likewise the guest. The guest is the man who takes the world as he finds it, and likes a good dinner. The population of society is made up of tyrants, slaves and guests. The man is a character of my own imagining.

The first scene of *The Captive* is the dungeon. When I was very young I was in Europe, and I was in a dungeon; I have never forgotten it. There enter the tyrant and the two slaves with the man: They chain him to the wall, and then the tyrant speaks. That first speech—I have written it now—I have gotten the hammer-thuds! Tyranny is an iron thing—you had to feel the tread of it, the words had to roll like thunder. It is an advantage to me that I am full of Wagner; I always hear the music with my poetry. (I shall be disappointed if someone does not make an opera out of *The Captive*.)

The man is there, and he is there forever. After that, once a day, bread and water are shoved in through an opening. But the door of the dungeon does not open again until the last act—when ten years have passed:

That is all. And now the man will battle with that problem. Will he go mad with despair? Will he sink into a wild beast? Will he commit suicide? Or what *will* he do? Day by day he sinks back from the question, numb with agony; day by day

the grim hand of Fate drags him to it; and so, until from the chaos of his soul he digs out, blow by blow, a faith.

Here there will be Reality; no shams and no lies will do here—here is iron necessity, and it cries out for iron truth. God—duty—will—virtue—let such things no more be names, let us see what they *are*!

These are awful words. Sometimes I shrink from this thing as from fire, sometimes I rush to it with a song; I am writing about it now because I am worn out and yet I cannot think of anything else.

This man will find the truth; being delivered from the captivity of the world and set free to be a soul. Superstition blinds him; doubt and despair and weakness blind him; but still he gropes and strives, cries out and battles for truth; until at last, shut up in his own being, he tears his way out to the very source of it, and knows for himself what it is. *Infinite it is, and unthinkable; glorious, all-consuming, all-sufficing; food and drink, friendship and love, ambition and victory, joy, power, and eternity it is to him who finds it: and all things in this world are nothing to him who finds it.*

And so comes the victory to this soul. Hour by hour he catches gleams of the light; day by day he toils toward it, with fear and agony and prayer; until at last he knows his salvation—to rest never, and to toil always, and to dwell in the Presence of his God. In one desperate hour he flings away the world and the hope of the world, and vows this consecration, and lives.

He keeps the vow; it is iron necessity that drives him. He finds himself, he finds his way—each day his step is surer.

Each day the channels of his being deepen: He lays broad plans for his life—he gathers all knowledge, he solves all problems; lord of the infinite mind, he ranges all existence, and beholds it as the symbol of himself. Into the deeps and yawning spaces of it he plunges; blind, he sees what men have never seen; deaf, he hears what men have never heard—singer he is, prophet and poet and maker. New worlds leap into being in the infinite fulness of his heart; visions of endless glory that make his senses reel; as a column of incense towering to the sky is the ecstasy of his adoration and his joy!

And so the long years roll by; and the un-
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conquered spirit has left the earth; left time and space and self, and dwells where never man has dwelt before. And then one day the door of the dungeon is opened, and his chains are shattered, and the slaves lead him up to the light of day.

It is the banquet-hall; and there is the tyrant, and there the guests—there is the world.

He is aged, and weak, and white, and terrible. They stare at him; and he stares at them, for he is dazed. They begin to mock at him, and then at last he realises, and he covers his face and weeps—beholding the world, and the way that it must come. They jeer at him, they strike him; and when he answers not, they call to the slaves to torture him.

This man has lived for ten years with *himself*. He is nothing but a will. And now they will conquer him!

I recall the highest moment of my being: I saw that moment, and all the others of my life. I saw them as something that I could not bear to see, and I cried out that from that hour I would change them. I have not kept the vow; there was no one to drive me.

But this man they drive; they pinch him and burn him and tear him; they crush his limbs, they break his bones, they grind his flesh, they make his brain a living fire of anguish. And he fights them.

Into the deep recesses of his being goes the cry—for all that he has—for all that he is! For every ounce of his strength, for every throb of his will, for every vision, every truth that he knows! To bear this, to save him here! And so he wrestles, so he rises, so he gropes and gasps; and in the moment of his fiercest straining, with the throb of all his being he bursts the barrier, he rends the veil; and infinite passion rolls in in floods upon him, he clutches all existence in his arms; and from his lips there bursts a mad, frenzied shout of rapture—that makes his torturers stand transfixed, listening, trembling with terror.

And so they drag him back to his dungeon; and there, unable to move, he lies upon the stones and pants out his ecstasy and his life.

That is The Captive:

April 30th:

It is weak of me, but sometimes I cannot

help but look ahead—and think that it is done! I could not find any words to tell the joy that will be to me—to be free, after so long—to be free!

I do not care anything about the fame—it would not be anything to me to be a great author. If it could be done, nothing would please me better than to publish it anonymously—to let no one ever know that it was mine. If I could only have the little that I need to be free, I would publish all that I might ever write anonymously.

I finished the first act just now.

May 1st.

Oh, it is funny—yes, funny!—Let us laugh at it. The dance-hall musician has brought home his 'cello! I heard him come bumping up the stairs with it—God damn his soul! And there he sits, sawing away at some loathsome jig tunes! And he has two friends in there—I listen to their wit between the tunes.

Here I sit, like a wild beast pent in a cage. I tell you I can bear any work in the world, but I cannot bear things such as this. That I, who am seeking a new faith for men—who am writing, or trying to write, what will mean new life to millions—should have my soul ripped into pieces by such loathsome, insulting indignities!

It is pouring rain outside, and my overcoat is thin; but I must go out and pace the streets and wait until a filthy Dutchman gets through scraping ragtime on a 'cello.

All day wasted! All day! Does it not seem that these things persecute you by system? I came in, cold and wet, and got into bed, and then he began again! And the friends came back and they had beer, and more music. And I had to get up and put on the wet clothes once more.

May 2nd.

I was crouching out on one of the docks last night. I had no place else to go. I can think anywhere, if it is quiet.

Oh, I hunger for the desert! I do not care for beauty—I have no time for beauty, I want the earth stern and forbidding. Give me some place where no one else would want to go—an iron crag where the oceans beat—a mountain-top where the lightning splinters on the rocks.

May 3rd.

I have not one single beautiful memory in my life. I have nothing in my life that, when I think of it, does not make me *writhe*.

Who knows what I suffer—who has any idea of it? To have a soul like a burning fire, to be hungry and swift as the Autumn wind, to have a heart as hot as the wild bird's, and wings as eager—and to be chained here in this seething hell of selfishness, this orgy of folly.

Ah, and then I shut my hands together. No, I am not weak, I do not spend my time chafing thus! I have fought it out so far:—

I was ever a fighter, so one fight more!

I will go back, and I will hammer and hammer again—grimly—savagely—day by day. And out of the furnace of my soul I will forge a weapon that will set me free in the end—I think.

May 4th.

I wrote a little poem once. I remembered two lines of it—a nature description; they were not great lines, but there flashed over me to-day an application of them that was a stroke of genius, I believe. I was passing the Stock Exchange. It was a very busy day. I climbed one of the pillars, in spirit, and wrote high above the portals:—

Where savage beasts through forest midnight roam,
Seeking in sorrow for each other's joy.

May 5th.

There are many ways to look at the world, and always a deeper one. I see it as a fearful thing, towering, expanding, upheld by the toil and the agony of millions. Who will bring us the new hope, the new song of courage, that it go not down into the dust to-day?

To do that there is the poet; to live and to die unheeded, and to feed for ages upon ages the hungry souls of men—that is to be a poet. Therefore will he sing, and sing ever, and die in the sweetness of his song.

May 6th.

This is just a month from the beginning. A month to-day! Yes; I have done my share, I have done a third of it—a third!

But the end is so much harder!

May 9th.

I have been for two days in the mire: I was disturbed, and then I was sluggish: Oh, the sluggishness of my nature!

If ever I am a great poet, I will have made myself that by the power of my will; that is a fact. I am by nature a great clod—I feel nothing, I care about nothing. I look at the flowers as a cow chewing its cud. It is only that I *will* to do right;

I go wandering that way—sometimes I sit so for an hour; and then suddenly I leap up with a cry. But I may try all I please—I don't care anything about the work—it doesn't stir me—the verses I think of make me sick. And then I remember that I have only so many weeks more; and what it will mean to fail; and that makes me desperate, but doesn't help.

When I have stopped at some resting-place in the poem, I can get going again: But now I have stopped in the middle of a climax; and the number of times that I have read that last line, trying to find another—Great Heavens!

But I cannot find another word. I am in despair.

I know perfectly well what I shall do, only I am a coward, and do not do it. I shall stay in this state till my rage has heaped itself up enough and breaks through everything at last. And then I shall begin to hammer myself; to swear at myself in a way that would make a longshoreman turn white. And I shall spend perhaps two or three hours—perhaps two or three days—doing that, until I am quite in a white heat, and then—I shall go to my work.

That is the price I pay for being distracted.

May 11th.

I said to myself the day before yesterday—with a kind of dry sob—"I can't do it! I can't do it!"

Oh, how tormented I am by noises—noises! What am I not tormented by? Some days ago I was writing in a frenzy—and the landlady came for her rent. And the horrible creature standing there, talking at me! "So lonely!—don't ever see people! Mrs. Smithers was a-saying—" Oh, damn Mrs. Smithers!

I thought I could never do it—I was really about to give it up. I went out on the street—I roamed about for hours, talking I don't know what nonsense to myself. And then at last I came home, and I knelt down there at the bedside and said: "Here you stay without anything to eat until you've written ten lines of that poem!"

And that was how I did it. I stayed there, and I prayed: I don't often pray, but that time I prayed like one possessed—I was so lonely and so helpless—and the work was so beautiful. I stayed there for nine blessed hours, and then the clock stopped and I couldn't count after that.

But the day came, and then the ten lines! And so I had my breakfast.

These things leave you weak, but a little less dull.

May 13th.

I have been working with a kind of wild desperation all day to-day. Oh, it hurts—it hurts—but I am doing it! Whenever I read some lines of it that are real—whenever some great living phrase flashes over me—then I laugh like a man in the midst of a battle.

I shall be just as a man who has been through a battle; haggard and wild and desperate. Oh, I don't think I shall ever have the courage to do it again!

I did not know what it meant! I did not! It was giving myself into the hands of a fiend!

All great books will be something different to me after this. Did Shakespeare write thus with the blood of his soul? Or am I weak? Did he ever cry out in pain, as I have?

May 14th.

Another day of raw torture. It is like toiling up a mountain side; and your limbs are of lead. It is like struggling in a nightmare—that is just what it is like. It is sickening.

But then you dare not stop. It is hard to go on, but it is ten times as hard to start if you stop.

I could hardly stand up this afternoon; but the thing was ringing in my ears—it went on and on—I had to go after it! I was in the seventh heaven—I could see anything, dare anything, do anything. It made no difference how hard—it called to me—on—on! And I said: "Suppose I were to be tortured—could I go then?" And so I went and went.

I haven't written it down yet; I felt sick! But I know it all.

Oh, men—oh, my brothers—will you love me for this thing?

May 16th

I did no writing yesterday or to-day: I have been terribly frightened.

I wrote what I had to write the day before yesterday—I could not help it. But when I stopped my head was literally on fire, and the strangest mad throbbing in it—I stood still in fear, it felt so as if something were going to burst—my head seemed to weigh a ton. I poured cold water over it, but it made no difference—it stayed that way all night and all yesterday.

What am I to do? I dare not think—I took a long walk, and even now I find myself thinking of the book without knowing it. Imagine me sitting on a doorstep and playing for two hours with a kitten!

Why should I be handicapped in such a way as this? I had never thought of such a thing.

I was thinking about *The Captive*—it is my own. Nobody has helped me—I have told not one person of it. Everything in it has come out of my soul.

May 18th:

I often think how I shall spend my money after *The Captive* is done. I shall take a band of chosen youths, seekers and worshippers, and we shall build a house on a mountain-top and worship the Lord in the beauty of music!

I shall have to begin at the beginning—I have never had anyone to teach me music. But, oh, if I did know! And if I ever got hold of an orchestra—*how* I would make it go!

And in the middle of it the astonished orchestra would see the conductor take wings unto himself and fly off through the roof.

May 20th:

I live among the poor people and that keeps me humble. There is not much chance for freedom, I hear them say, there are not many who can dwell in the forests: Prove your right to it—prove what you can do—the law is stern. I am not afraid of the challenge; I will prove what I can do:

But I see one here and there with whom the law is not so strict, I think:

I met a merchant the other night: I dreamt of him: He said: "I buy such goods as men need; I buy them as cheaply as I can, since life is grim: I sell them as cheaply as I can, since men are poor and suffering. I make of profit what I need to live humbly: I am not of the world's seekers; I am of the finders."

I met also a guileless fool:

We passed a great mansion: "I should like to know the man who lives there," said the fool:

"Should you?" said I:

"Is he a hero?" asked the fool:

"No," said I:

"Is he a poet?" asked the fool:

"No," said I:

"Must he not be very beautiful," said the fool, "that men judge him worthy of so much beauty?"

May 21st:

I must finish this thing this time! That cry rings in my ears night after night: I am toiling upward—upward—I can see no sign of the end yet—but I must finish this time! If I had to stop with this thing haunting me—if I had to go out into that jungle of a world with this weight upon me—to repress myself with this fire in my heart—I could not bear it—I could not bear it!

And if I stopped and went out into that world again—how many weeks of agony would it cost me to get back to where I am now!

I must finish this time!

May 22nd:

I have never seen but one beautiful thing in New York, and that is its mighty river in the night-time: I wander down to the docks when my work is done, and when it is still; I sit and gaze at it until the city is quite gone, and all its restlessness—until there is but that grave presence, rolling restlessly, silently, as it has rolled for ages: It makes no comments; it has seen many things.

To-night I sat and watched it till a tangled forest sprang up about me, and I saw a strange, high-bowed, storm-beaten craft glide past me, ghostly white, its ghostly sailors gazing ahead and dreaming of spices and gold.

The old, old river—my only friend in a whole city! It goes its way—it is not of the hour.

It fascinates me, and I sit and sit and wonder: I gaze into its black and gurgling depths, and whisper what Shelley whispered: "If I should go down there, I should *know*!"

But no, I should not know anything:

May 25th.

Line by line, page by page, I do it: I am counting the days now, wondering—longing.

It is not merely the writing of it, it is the seeing of it—the planning and designing: Sometimes I brood over it for hours—I cannot find what I want; and then suddenly a phrase flashes over me and like a train of gunpowder my thought goes running on—leaping, flying; and then the whole thing is plain as day: And I hold it all living in my hands:

I am blessed with a good memory. In times of excitement such as that I seize all the best phrases and carry them away, and bury them out of sight, like a miser. They are my nuggets of gold.

And sometimes I am a greedy miser, and stand perplexed; shall I go on and gather more, or shall I make off with the armful that I have?

May 27th:

Will you imagine me to-day, kneeling by the bedside, shuddering; my face hidden, the tears streaming down my cheeks—and I crying aloud: "I will—oh, I will!"

I cannot tell any more.

May 29th:

I am coming to the last scenes. I hear them rumbling in my soul—far, far off—like a distant surf on a windless night.

I am coming, step by step; I mean to fight it out on this line.

May 30th.

To-day I had a spiritual experience—a revelation; to-day, in a flash of insight, I understood an age—whole centuries of time, whole nations of men.

I had been writing one of the great hymns, one of the great victories; and I had been drunk with it, it had come with a surge and a sweep, it had set everything about me in motion—huge, phantom shapes—all life and all being gone mad.

And then, when I had written it, I went out into the dark night; I walked and walked, not knowing where, still tingling with excitement. And, suddenly, I stood spellbound—the cathedral!

There it was—there it was! I saw it, alive and real before me—all of it—all that I had seen and known! I cried out for joy, I stretched out my arms to it—the great, dark, surging presence; and all my soul went with it, singing, singing—up into the misty night!

June 1st.

I sat to-night by the river again. It was moonlight, and the water lay shimmering. A little yacht, gleaming with lights, sped by; it was very close, and I saw a group of people on it, I heard them laughing; and one of them—a woman—was singing.

O God, what a voice! So rich, so exquisite! It soared upward and died again, quivering like the reflection of the stars on the water. It went in—in to the very depths of my

soul; it loosed all the woe of my spirit, it made the tears gush into my eyes. And then it died away, away in the distance; and I sat with my hands clasped.

Sail on—sail on—oh, heavenly voice! Far-off vision of brightness and beauty! Your lot is not my lot:

June 2nd.

I shall come out of this a man—a man! I shall know how to live all my days! I shall have memories that will always haunt me, memories that I can build the years by!

June 3rd.

From the time that I began *The Captive* it has been almost two months; it is just six weeks from the day I wrote that I had ten or twelve weeks in which to finish. I have done well financially—I have twenty-one dollars left, and I have paid for my typewriting.

It is not a fortune. But enough is as good as a fortune.

And I am coming on! I have been counting the scenes—I am really within sight of the end.

—That day when I crouched by the bed I saw all of the end. I have seen the whole thing. It will leave me a wreck, but I can do it. And it will take me about three weeks.

Think of my being able to say that!—Five or six hundred lines at least I shall have to do, and still I dare to say that. But I am full of this thing, I mount with it all the time. I am finding my wings.

Nothing can stop me now; I feel that I shall hold myself to it. I become more grim every day.

No one can guess what it means to me to find that I have hold of the whole of this thing! It is like strong wine to me—I scarcely know where I am:

June 4th:

I am sitting down by the window and first I kick my heels against my old trunk, and then I write this. I heard them come up for his trunk just now and they've dragged it downstairs, and I hear the landlady fuming because they are tearing the wallpaper. I have never loved the sound of the landlady's voice before.

—The world is divinely arranged, there is no question about it.

June 5th.

Deep in my soul I was convinced that the room would be let to something worse. But now it appears that the landlady's sister is to occupy it.

—So now I will get to work!

—Moving is noisy; I can't complain. I have been walking about the streets. I am hungry for the work; but still, I had much to think of. It is a wonderful thing—a glorious thing, this story—it will make men's hearts leap.

June 6th:

I have plenty of time to write journals if I feel like it. There is the sister, and there is the landlady, and there is another woman, and they have been jabbering about dresses all the morning. I have been like a crazy man—I was all on fire this morning, too! O God, it is too cruel!

I could dress those three hags with broomsticks.

—How long is this to continue, I want to know. Here it is afternoon and they are still chattering. Every time I have tried to compose my thoughts they have come back and begun chattering again. And so I can only pace about, and then rush out into the street—and wear myself sick. I call this simply monstrous. That my soul should be tied down to such vulgarity as this—is it not maddening? Here I am—with all my load of woe—at this fearful crisis! And I am to be shattered and wrecked and ruined by *this*! Just as long as they choose to sit there, just so long I am helpless. Was it for this that I have borne all the pain?

It seems to me that I hear jeering laughter around me from a swarm of little demons: I hide my face and flee, but they follow me.

But what can you expect? Have they not a right to talk?—Yes—all the world has a right to be as hideous as it can. And I have no right but to suffer and to choke in my rage.

Three vile, ignorant serving-women! Serving-women—ah, yes! and if they were *my* servants! If I could pay them!—But who serves me! Of what consequence am I?

—Of course this thing could not go on: And so, of course—stammering and writhing, as I always do when I have my nose pushed

into this kind of filth—I had to speak to the landlady about it to-night.—

And of course the landlady was astonished. “Why, Mr. Stirling, can't a body talk in a body's own room?” Yes, a body can talk, but then other bodies have to move away.

Now she's going to speak to her sister about it. And here I sit, writhing and trembling. Oh, my God, suppose I have to move! Oh, merciful Father, have pity on me—I can't bear much of this! To go tramping around this hot and horrible city, to go into some new and perhaps yet more dirty place! And, oh, the agony, the shame—suppose *that* will not do and I have to keep on searching! Dragging this fearful burden with me! And I have only eighteen dollars left!

If I think of it any longer I shall scream with nervousness.

June 7th.

And now it is all settled. A body has to talk in a body's own room, and a body's nose has to turn up with indignation as a body announces the fact. And so here I sit, waiting for the express-man to come for my trunk.

Now that it is over it does not seem so bad. I am like a snail—once back in my shell, I do not care what happens. I have given up trying to write *The Captive*, and so nothing bothers me any more.—I have forgotten all about it now, it is years behind me.

But I have seen it all; I can get it back in good time. I do not fear.

I have rolled up a little bundle, a tooth-brush and some manuscripts principally; and I send the rest to a friend's house. I have had an inspiration. Why should I stay in this hot and steaming place?—Why should I be “barricaded evermore within the walls of cities?”

Why did I not think of this in the beginning? I am going now to see the Spring-time!—“the only pretty ring time, when birds do sing—hey ding-a-ding!”

That was a real idea. I do not know where I am going; but I will walk and get somewhere—there will be woods. I'll sleep in hayricks if it can't be managed any other way:—

Away, away from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs!

I could have been through in three weeks

now, I believe. But it was not to be We have to take what comes to us:—

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate.

I'm glad I don't have to write poetry like that!

June 8th.

Ah, to be out in the open air again, to see the world green and beautiful; to run with the wind and look at the flowers and listen to the birds! I am sitting by a spring; I have eaten my dinner.

I turned my steps Jerseyward:

—I have been walking all day. I must find some place to stop very soon. I cannot think of the country with this burden on me. I am like a sick animal—I seek a hiding-place. I fancied I might think of my work on the way, but I cannot. The world is happy; my work is not happy.

My hope is all in the end of the journey, and the walking is drudgery. And then, my money is going! I must find some sort of a hut—a tumble-down house, an old barn—anything.

I shall trudge one more day's journey: Then I think I shall be far enough from New York.

—I passed a tramp to-day; and while we walked together I composed an address:

“My brother—for are we not brothers thou and I?”

“Have we not fled from the sleek man, thou and I? And is it not we alone that know Truth?”

“Thy clothing is ragged, and there is hunger in thine eyes; it is so also with me:

“It is thy fate to wander; it is my fate to wander too. And with restless eyes to look out upon the world, to meet with distrust from men.

“Yet not for that am I sad, nay, not for that, but for a deeper sorrow; because I was sent out into the world with a curse upon me, because I was sent out into the world a Drunkard.

“Yea, so it is, my brother:

“And that for which I thirst is not easy to find; and when I have found it I am not content, but must seek more; and so I have only desolation:

“Who laid this curse upon us, my brother?”

“That we should dwell in sorrow and unrest?”

“That no man should heed our voice, and that we should grow weak and faint?”

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“That we should die, and be forgotten—thou and I?”

“Oh, tell us wherefore—ye wise men.”

June 9th:

I have walked another day. I am beginning to get away from the suburban towns, and into the real country. I knew that it would cost me a good deal to go to a hotel last night, and it was warm, so I slept in a haystack! It was quite an adventure: Now I've got my pockets stuffed full of rolls, Benjamin Franklin style.

—My mind is like the ocean after a storm:

The great waves come rolling over it still; it is all restless, tossing. But it is sinking, sinking to rest!—Heaven grant that I may find my place of refuge before it is quite calm.

It is everything or nothing with me; I am made that way. Either I give every instant of my time, every thought, every effort to my work, or else I close up like a flower and wait. I cannot write poetry and hunt a lodging, too.

So I am waiting—waiting—!

June 10th.

I began inquiring to-day—a shanty, a barn—anything. Everyone thinks it necessary to be very much puzzled about what I want it for. My clothes are still fairly respectable, and so they tell me about pretty Summer cottages—only so much per month!

June 12th:

I have been tramping on and on for two more days. I do not believe I shall ever find what I want. Nothing but one old musty place in ruins, so far! And my money is going, and I am wild with anxiety! I am almost tempted to turn back to the ruin.

June 13th:

I am sitting in a room in a dirty hotel. It was raining to-day and I had to come here. I shall probably have to pay fifty cents, too. I won't stay to breakfast.

Oh, what will I do if my money gives out? I saw a cottage to-day that a man said I could have for ten dollars a month. I was tempted to spend nearly all I had and take it, and live on bread and water. I am desperate.

June 14th:

“Perhaps maybe you'd like ‘Oaklands,’” said the farmer, laughing.

"Oaklands" turned out to be the home of a millionaire "dry-goods man" who was in Europe. I did not want "Oaklands."

"I don't know of anything else," said the farmer, scratching his head. Then he added with a grin: "Unless it be the cook-house."

"What's the cook-house?" I asked suspiciously.

"Oh, it's a kind of a little place they've got 'way out in the woods," said the farmer. "It's where they goes when they goes picnicking."

My heart gave a jump. "What sort of a place?" I asked.

"They've got a big platform chiefly, where they put up a tent. The cook-house ain't nothin' but a little two by four shanty, with a big stove in it."

"How big is it?" I cried.

"It's about half o' this here room, I reckon."

("This here room" was about six of my rooms in New York!)

"And where is it?" I cried. "How can I get there?"

"Oh, you don't want to go to no sech place ez that!" said the farmer. "There ain't no bed nor nothing in it! An' it's two mile out there in the woods!"

Let anybody imagine how my heart was going! "Who can show it to me?" I panted.

"Why," said he, "I'm the man that's in charge of it; but I——"

"And can you rent it to me for a month?"

"Why, I don't know any reason why I can't rent it to you for a year—only it ain't worth nothin', an'——"

"Then rent it to me! The less it is worth the better it will suit me. But come, show me where it is!"

"I reckon I can show you," said the man, looking perplexed. "But what in the world do you want to go into that lonesome place for? Why, boy, nobody goes there in a month! An' what you goin' to do for somethin' to eat, an' some place to sleep, an'——"

I managed to get him started at last. And now, oh, just look at me! I've been roaming around staring at it—inside and outside. The gods love me after all.

The infinite relief that it is! The infinite exultation that it is! And all to myself—not a soul near me! And out in the woods! *And mine for a month!* Oh, blessed 'cello player that moved away; blessed landlady's sister that talked——!

And, oh, blessed cook-house! We will

make thee a consecrated cook-house before we get through—we will! We will cook a dish in thee that will warm the hearts of a goodly company—oh, blessed cook-house!

—And outside a great white moon streaming through the forest trees!

The "cook-house" is about ten feet square. It is about one-third stove, now covered with a newspaper and serving as a table. Besides that there is one chair, for which I have just improvised a leg, with the help of my knife.

Besides the knife I have a fork, a plate, a cup, and a spoon—borrowed from the farmer. I have a blanket and a bed consisting of an old carriage robe, rented from the farmer. I have a lamp and a kerosene-can—ditto. I have a frying-pan—ditto. But I haven't my little oil-stove, so I fear I shall eat mostly cold things. I have a pail of milk, a loaf of bread, a ginger-cake, some butter, some eggs, some bacon, some apples and some radishes; also a tooth-brush, a comb, a change of clothing, two handkerchiefs, some pencils and paper, Prometheus Bound, Prometheus Unbound, Samson Agonistes, faith, hope, and charity!

—I believe I have named all the necessities of life.

June 15th.

I have scooped myself out a bathtub below the spring. I forgot towels in my list of necessities! I fear it will be inconvenient on rainy days. I am like a child with a new toy, in my wonderful home. I was too excited to think of working. I fried an egg over a little fire, and then I roamed all about the woods. I don't remember ever having been so happy before. I had forgotten there was anything beautiful in the world.

—I spent the whole of the afternoon dreaming a dream. When I have finished *The Captive* and gotten some money, I am going to have a little house in the woods! I have just had it before my eyes—and I laughed with delight like a boy.

It will be a fine, big house—it will cost about fifty dollars; and there will be a table and a chair, and a cot, and such things. It will stand by a lake, a wild lake far out in the mountains! I have vowed to find a lake at least five miles from anything; and once a week I will have somebody bring me provisions.

—That is the way I shall spend next Summer!—Up, up! Get to work!

June 17th.

I have done nothing for two days but wander around and stare at things. It is all gone, every gleam of it! And I cannot bring it back—I know not what to do, where to turn. I stopped in one of the hardest parts of the whole thing—in the very midst of it; and how in the world am I to begin? I walk around, I sit down, I get up again; I try to put my thoughts upon it, I bring them back again and again. But I cannot do it—I have let every thread of it go. What has tramping over the country and delight in houses got to do with my work?

I have nothing to write—the whole thing is a blank to me. And here I am, eating up my provisions!—This shows me what I am—what a child.

—But how am I to get up on those fearful heights again? How am I to take the first step toward those fearful heights again? I cry that all day!

June 20th.

Oh, the joy of being out in the woods! I never knew of it before—I never dreamt it!

It is better than an orchestra. To be able to stretch your arms! To have a place to walk! To be able to talk aloud!—to laugh—to shout—to do what you please!—to be free from all men, and the thought of all men!

And to hear your own poetry aloud!—I cried out to-day that I would go back and do the whole of *The Captive* over again, so that I could hear it out loud. It made me quite wild yesterday when I first realised that I was *alone*!

—Last night there was a gale, and the clouds sped over the moon, and the wind roared in the trees—and I roared too!

—“For I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set!”

June 21st.

I did just as I have always done before. I got desperate enough, and then I went to work. I said: “I will! and I will! and I will!” I think I said nothing else for twenty-four hours.

And so the storm again, and the great waves speeding!

Is there anyone who has ever watched the great waves?—How they go! They take you right with them. My verses shall be waves.

I am tired out again; but, oh, I am filled with my music! There was never any poetry like it in the world!

And at the height of it I cry out: “I am free! I am free!”

“I won’t have to stop again!”

“I can go to the very end of it!”

“And I don’t care who hears me!”

“I am free!”

June 23rd.

I ate a raw egg this morning. For yesterday I let the fire go out five times, and gave up my breakfast rather than start a sixth.

I wanted to save time—I thought it would be egg just the same; but I record it for future generations of poets, that the experiment is not a success. You taste raw egg all day.

I shall have them all hard-boiled in the farmhouse after this.

—Twenty-eight lines to-day! I had more, but I lost them, and then I fell down.

—There is always a new height, but there are not always new words. My verse grows more and more incoherent, and more and more daring. I can feel the difference of a whole lifetime between it now and what I wrote ten weeks ago!

I have worn a path in the woods, deep and wide, pacing back and forth, back and forth, all day. Anyone who saw me would think that I was mad. Fighting—fighting—all the time fighting! Sometimes I run—sometimes I don’t know what I do. Last night I know that it grew dark, and that I was still lying flat on the dead leaves, striking my hands, that were numb with excitement. I was too weak to move—but I remember panting out: “There is nothing like that in *King Lear*!”

I brought about twenty phrases out of that, and one or two sentences. They will fall into the verse the next time it comes.

June 24th.

—Listen to me, oh, thou world—I will tell you something! You may take a century to understand those phrases—to stop laughing at them, perhaps—who knows? But those sentences are *real*; and they will last as long as there is a man alive to read them!

When I let anything make me cease to believe in that scene, may I die!

—I will shout it aloud on the streets; they are *real*!

And there has been nothing like them done for some years, either;

June 25th.

To-day you may imagine me frantically throwing stones at a squirrel. I said: "If I get him I won't have to go to the farmhouse to-morrow."

I had had nothing to eat but bread and apples for two meals, and I couldn't stand that again.

I had fried squirrel and fried apples for supper. It was a very curious repast.

And I was hungry, and I ate too much! That made me wild, of course, and I flung all my apples away into the woods. May they feed new squirrels!

June 26th.

I get up every morning like—like the sun! I overflow with laughter—nothing frightens me now. I never knew what was the matter with me before—it was simply that I could not fight as I chose. If ever I go back again to have my soul pent up in the cities of men!

I am full of it—full of it! I grapple with it all the day, I cannot get enough of it. I do crazy things.

And the harder it is the faster I go! This thing has been my torturing—it has made me fight and live. That is really the truth.

And I am coming to the end—really to the end!

June 27th.

A rainy day! And no glass in my house—only a board cover to the window. I made myself a nest on the sheltered side.

Nearer! Nearer!

June 29th.

Wandering through the woods dreaming of a banquet-hall.—The guests are witty.

I have put into the mouths of the guests all that the world has said to me, since first I went poetical.

June 30th.

To-day I got a big stock of things to eat. I count my time not by days, but by loaves of bread and dozens of hard-boiled eggs.

—This book goes out into the world, not to be judged, but to judge!

July 1st.

You do not hear much from a man in a battle, just now and then a cry.

I have gone in to seek out my last enemy

—the last demon who has defied me. I shall close with him—I shall have the thing over with—I will no longer be haunted and made sick.

—I believe I shall do it all in one day. I don't think I can lay it aside.

July 3rd.

It is done!—

I wrote that at three o'clock this morning, and then I lay back and laughed and sobbed, and in the end I fell asleep in the chair.

I was not ill—my relief was so great. I was only happy. I lay back and closed my eyes. I have borne my child.

It is done! It is done! I realise it, and then I am like a crazy person. I do not know what I am doing—I only wander around and sit down in the woods and laugh and talk to myself. O God, I am so happy!

I have only to write the end—the last scene in the dungeon. And that is nothing. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course!"

July 4th.

I have only to write the echoes that are in my heart, the stammering words of thanksgiving. It is nothing—I have been over them. My whole being is melted with the woe of them—but I can do them anywhere—anyhow.

—And a sudden wild longing has come over me for the city. I must take all the world into my arms—I am so happy—I love it so!

Ah, I have done it! I have done it! I am free! *Free! FREE!*

I must get this thing typewritten—I must get rid of it—it must be published. How long does it take to get a book published?

July 5th.

I fought a fight with myself yesterday, and won it. The last of my weaknesses! I wanted to pack up my things and go home! And finish my poem on the train! I was that hungry for the goal! But I am still here—doing the last scene. I shall stay until it is done. I cannot stay after that:

Let me hear how your voice trembles as you sing the last strains of your song, and I will tell you how great an artist you are:—

Good-night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

July 6th.

Five in the afternoon! And the wind was howling in turret and tree, and all the

forest was an organ chant. So I packed up my belongings, and laid my poem in next to my heart—the last words written: "It is done!"

And I went out and stood and gazed at my little home. Farewell, farewell, little home! Perhaps I shall never see you again; but ever you will live in my fancy as my Heaven upon earth. They built thee for picnic parties! And I wonder what proud prince had built for his pleasures—the Garden of Gethsemane!

And now I go forth like a bridegroom out of my chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. And all the world dances around me, and I stretch out my arms and sing!

Come, come, my foes, where are ye now? What foes shall I be afraid of now! Is it the world and its trials? Come!

I go back to conquer—I have forged my weapon! I have bared my arm! Where are those foes of mine?

There is nothing so commonplace that it does not sing to me. I walk with a springing step, I laugh, I exult. Birds, flowers, men—I love them all; I get into the train, and the going of it is drunkenness. I have won! I have won!

I go back to the world. Come, world! I have but four dollars left—four dollars!—and *The Captive*!

It is not strange that a man should be made drunk with happiness by the writing of a tragedy! That is the great insincerity of the artist. "That cry of agony!—what a triumph of genius was that my cry of agony!"

—It is not the sorrow, it is the struggle;

so I read the tragedy. This man is dead, but God lives, and Art lives.

I will go back, I will do anything now—I will empty ash-cans, and find it a joy: The book is done—safe in next to my heart?—And now it will be printed, and not fire nor earthquake can destroy it after that: Free! Free!

I am writing on the train. I write commonplaces. That is because I cannot shout.

But back there, coming out of the woods, I shouted—and not commonplaces either!

Coming out of the forest—forest-drunk! Now I know all about Pan and his creatures!

I write carelessly. But in my heart I sit shuddering before that fearful glory. O God, my Father, let me not forget this awful week, and I will live in Truth all my days.

*July 7th.**

Wandering all day about the streets of the hot city, seeing it not, hearing it not—waiting for the last lines of the poem to be copied! I could not do anything until that was done, and at a publisher's. I got it and fled home, and spent the night correcting the copy.

Ah, God, what a thing it is! How it roars, how it thunders, how it surges! How infinite, how terrible! Stern, throbbing—is there anything like it in the world?

Ten lines of it make my blood tingle—an act of it makes me bury my face in my pillow and laugh and sob for five minutes.

Go forth, oh, my perfect song!

*Possibly an error in the date, as the day was Sunday.

(Next month Mr. Sinclair will tell of some of his sufferings while trying to find a publisher for "The Captive.")

The Fatal Flower.

By *RENNIE RENNISON.*

The story of a mysterious epidemic.

"NO, nobody understands it, and the doctors are no wiser than the rest.

A few hours' agony and the sufferer simply dies from the intense pain."

"Most horrible! Can it be the water, or the drains?"

"Can't say; but it is only the well-to-do people who suffer. Except for Captain Sylten's gardener, none of the poorer classes have been affected."

"Very queer! Very queer!"

The above sentences were the continuation of a conversation I had interrupted by my entrance into the railway carriage, and I was at once anxious to hear more on the matter. The speakers were two elderly gentlemen, and the topic was soon changed; but as the train rattled on its way I kept my ears open for further particulars.

I was a medical man by training, but had—perhaps unfortunately—a private fortune, which made me feel disinclined to take up the work of an ordinary practitioner. I had wasted a couple of years trying to decide what line I should work upon, for it was my ambition to become some kind of specialist, but I was as far off as ever from making up my mind. There was nothing to stimulate me into action, nothing to compel me to work for a living.

The few words I had just heard suggested some opening of an uncommon nature; but the old fellows got on to politics, and there was no room for a word of inquiry. At last, however, the train stopped, one of the passengers got out, and I was left alone with the one who seemed the more likely to satisfy my curiosity.

He was a talkative old man, and at once began commenting on some recent speech in the House of Commons. I agreed with his criticism of it, and then, without being too precipitate, turned the conversation back to the point of my entry into the carriage.

"Oh, yes, yes; you mean the epidemic. Well, you must not ask me what it is, when the doctors don't know. It broke out three years ago, and has returned each Summer. There was a case only a week ago—very sad

—young girl of eighteen, and as bonnie and healthy a lassie as ever walked."

I inquired as to the symptoms.

"Well, the sufferers always complain of agonising pains, which seem to commence in one or both hands and shoot through the body. All is over in a few hours, and nothing is revealed by a post-mortem examination. The doctors say that death comes from the great strain the pain puts upon the nervous system."

Then the man began recounting the victims of this mysterious disease, but the details were of no scientific value. At last I said:

"I am a doctor, and should like to study this disease. What size is the place—Radderford, I think you call it? Is there a decent hotel?"

There was no hotel, he told me, but a very decent inn; and he offered to introduce me to the principal people if I came down. In fact, he was so cordial that he even invited me to put up at his own house; but I could not think of thus forcing myself upon a complete stranger.

A fortnight later I traveled down to Radderford and took rooms at the Red Bull, a quiet inn which stood opposite the main entrance to the parish church. It was Saturday night when I arrived, and on the following morning I walked across to the church.

At the opposite side of the nave I espied my railway carriage friend—Manters, he had said, was his name—and then I began to feel sorry that I had not accepted his hospitality. Two young ladies sat with him—his daughters, I guessed them to be—and they were, without doubt, the most beautiful pair of girls in the building.

The elder and taller was a fine, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed woman of about twenty-four, but it was the younger one who attracted my attention. She had a sweet and somewhat pale face, which carried the innocence of a child of eight and the kindness of an old woman of eighty, and

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THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.—VOL. III.—47.

I was so struck with that face that at the time I noticed nothing else about her.

I should probably have thrown glances through most of the service at this sweet girl, if my attention had not been suddenly arrested in another direction. It was a man's face that caught my eye, and the expression thereon was the most diabolical I have ever beheld. He would be, perhaps, forty years of age or a little more; but I never saw cruelty, cunning, and real wickedness so plainly marked on a countenance. I wondered how such a man could come to such a sacred place.

After the service ended I was strolling out of the church, when I felt a hand laid on my shoulder.

"Excuse me, but I believe you are the young doctor from London. Allow me to welcome you to Radderford. My name is Sylten—Captain Sylten."

The tone was hearty and kindly, so my surprise may be imagined when I found on turning round that the speaker was no other than the man with the evil face: That face, however, was beaming with good humour, and I began to think the shadows in the sombre building had played upon my fancy.

"My friend Manters told me you were coming. Ah! here he is, with Sybil and Alice."

I was introduced to the two young ladies, and received a pretty welcome from Sybil, but the younger girl seemed very shy. I was also introduced to the two resident doctors, although I could see that they would have been better pleased had I stayed in London.

Taken on the whole, I found the Radderford people very sociable, but I had been fortunate in my introduction. Mr. Manters was not only wealthy, but the most respected man in the place, and a friend of his was heartily welcome.

Everybody laughed at the object of my visit, for it was hoped the epidemic had been stamped out, but I stayed on for a few weeks enjoying the companionship of my new friends, and almost forgetting that I was not on a pleasure trip.

Before the first week was out Captain Sylten looked me up at the Red Bull. He bore me away there and then to his little villa, and I found him a most entertaining companion. He had seen active service in various parts of the world, and had done some traveling and exploring on his own account, whilst he had a knack of telling

about his adventures in a manner which interested the dullest listener.

I was attracted by the man, and still more so by his garden, which was the most beautiful I ever entered. It was not particularly large, but every plant was the rarest of its kind, while the general arrangement gave a mixture of colouring and foliage which was matchless. He seemed to love every little plant, and the greater part of his time was spent among these vegetable children of his.

When ladies came to visit him he told them to help themselves, and the more and choicer flowers they took the better he seemed pleased.

As I got to know more of the Radderford people, and especially as I became better acquainted with Alice Manters, I began to think that in the event of my failing to make a mark in the medical world, I might do worse than settle down in the district as a private individual.

Alice was very shy with me, as she was with almost everybody else, but I felt that there was more than a remote chance of her reciprocating my own feelings. In my round of pleasures I began to forget the epidemic until—when it was least expected—I was called very early one morning by one of Mr. Manters' servants. One of his daughters had caught it.

"Which?" I asked in horror.

"Miss Manters—Miss Sybil," was the reply, and then I breathed a little more freely.

I hurried across to the house, and there found the girl in bed. She had been for a cycle ride with her sister and a servant in the afternoon, and had retired to rest well and happy. In the early hours of the morning the household had been aroused by her screams, and when I arrived she was simply writhing in agony, with the bedclothes screwed up into all sorts of shapes.

When I questioned her, all I could get was "Here! here!" as she pointed to her right hand, "and everywhere! Everywhere! Oh, kill me, somebody! I cannot bear it!"

I tried injecting morphia, and she seemed relieved, but as soon as its effects had worn off her agony recommenced. I injected more, but it only meant prolonging the tortures, and, after discussing the matter with the two other doctors, who had arrived, we let her die. These words appear hard and cruel in print, but we were helpless—we did what we thought was kindest.

I have seen the results of pain and disease, and assisted in some butcherlike operations, but I never saw anything so terrible as the death of this beautiful young girl. I left the room dazed and exhausted, followed by Alice, all unknown to me.

Just as I reached the door it opened very suddenly, and I was nearly knocked over by a tall, handsome, sunburnt young fellow, who came bounding in like a school-boy.

"Hello, Alice! Where are they all? Where's Sybil? I've stolen a march on you this time—only landed three hours ago."

Then I turned and saw Alice, and I shall never forget the look on her sweet face.

"Tell him, Dr. Cassen! Tell him!" she cried. "Never mind me." For the poor girl had reached the end of her strength and sank to the floor. It was only a faint, and we soon brought her round, and then I took the new-comer into the garden and told him all.

He was terribly cut up, and the strong man wept like a child. Rithers his name was—Henry Rithers—and I found he had been engaged to poor Sybil for about three years. His father was in the timber trade, in a large way, and Henry had of late years done most of the buying, his last trip having been to South America. There was to have been a wedding when he returned, but instead there was a funeral, whilst a gloom hung over the little village for many a day.

Poor Rithers was desperate with grief for some time, but he seemed to appreciate the manner in which I had broken the truth to him. We became great friends, and used to go out together on long tramps.

One day we returned earlier than usual, and as we passed Captain Sylten's house I suggested dropping in for tea. The Captain had often given Rithers a cordial invitation to call, but he had not yet accepted it, so he at once fell in with my proposition.

Unfortunately the Captain was not at home, but, as we were there, I told my friend that he ought to see the garden. He appeared indifferent, but his eyes brightened as soon as he entered, for the first plant he noticed was one which grew wild in South America, but which he had believed could not thrive in this country. We walked slowly round the lawn, when my companion made a sudden exclamation:

"Another old friend?" I asked.

"Rather!" he replied, pointing to a bunch of herbage without either beauty or scent.

"Not its time to flower, I suppose?" I remarked.

"Well, it hasn't a flower worth mentioning," he explained. "It has no beauty, but it once saved my life."

I was interested.

"It was not in South America," he went on, "but a few years before, when I was in a remote part of the Himalayas. Our people thought there might be cheap timber up there and sent me out to see. Well, we had to traverse some terrible jungles. One day I got stung by a very deadly nettle, more deadly, they say, than a snake bite. I was in terrible pain, when one of the native carriers got some of those leaves and rubbed my hands and face with them till I yelled with pain. He nearly rubbed the skin off, but it saved me."

I had heard neither of such a nettle nor its antidote, so I asked their name.

"I don't know," he replied. "The natives called the nettle the 'hell flower,' but had no name at all for the other. I always called it the Indian dock, but, as you see, it is nothing like the dock leaf we use for nettle stings in this country."

We walked slowly round the garden, but before long Rithers made another sudden exclamation. This time it was very much like a very forcible swear word.

"The very thing!" he jerked out. "Why, the man must be mad to cultivate it."

"Cultivate what?"

"Those. The hell flowers themselves."

There was a large bunch of stately flowers standing quite six feet high. The leaves were certainly not unlike nettle leaves, but the flowers stood out like glorified antirrhinums in varied and most gorgeous colours. I experienced a sickening sensation as I looked at them, for I suddenly recollected having seen them amongst a bunch of flowers by the bedside of Sybil. I also remembered my first impression of Captain Sylten, but was interrupted from my reverie by hearing that gentleman's voice at the other end of the garden.

"Not a word about the hell flowers to the Captain," I said hurriedly to my companion. "I'll explain later."

We had to stay to tea; but I felt anxious to get out of the house as soon as possible,

so we left early. I took Rithers back towards the country and told him my suspicions; but he let me go on without putting in a word, though his face bore a look of stern resolve when I had finished.

I laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Rithers!" I said, "don't do anything until you have further proof. If he is really guilty, you will not find me in the way."

"You are right," he said hoarsely. "I'll wait—and watch."

We returned to the village and to the inn, where Rithers was also staying; but he was terribly restless, and soon went out again.

I settled down to write some letters, but about ten o'clock a man on horseback rode in from the Manters' and called for me.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Miss Alice, sir. Took like the others."

"Get off!" I said to the man, and, bare-headed as I was, I mounted his horse and raced as if for my life.

I found Alice in bed, tortured just like her sister had been; but as I entered the room I could see by her soft eyes that she was happier for my presence.

To the astonishment of all present I quickly asked:

"Did Miss Alice bring any flowers home this afternoon?"

"Yes," answered the father.

"Where are they? Quick!"

I believe they thought I had lost my senses, for, although I had said nothing to Alice, it had been generally seen that I was passionately fond of her. They quickly brought the bunch, and then I saw, like glorious finishing touches to a beautiful bouquet, three hell flowers towering up in the centre.

Without another word I was on the horse and away again, riding as fast as the animal would carry me to the Captain's garden. I alighted at a distance from the house, and was about to force my way through the hedge as being the nearest way, when a hand was laid on my shoulder.

I started, but a quiet voice said: "What's the matter, Doctor?" and I found it was Rithers.

"Alice has been stung!" I replied hurriedly. "I have come for some of the Indian dock."

"Here you are," he answered, thrusting a large plant, root and all, into my hand. "Rub it well in."

I did rub it well in, although it cut me

to the heart to be so rough with Alice's pretty hands. But I knew it was a matter of life and death, not of sentiment. The pains continued, but they grew no worse, so I rubbed on with a feeling approaching hopefulness. Never before had this shy girl felt so dear to me, and she seemed to read my intentions in spite of the rough treatment I had to deal out to her.

Soon after midnight had passed the pains began to abate, and the girl was less restless but utterly exhausted. About three in the morning she fell into a restless sleep, but the uneasiness passed, and after another hour she was sleeping as peacefully as a child.

The dim light of morning dawned at last, and to her father I carried the glad news.

"She is saved. She sleeps."

"Thank God!" he muttered hoarsely.

During the morning Rithers called and asked to see me.

"Have you got that Indian dock?" he asked, after making a remark on my looks which anxiety had altered almost out of recognition.

"No. I rubbed it to pieces."

"Then throw the bits in the fire. Is Alice better? That's all right. Now, burn those bits at once."

There was something peculiar about Rithers that morning, and the change was more marked than on the previous night. He spoke like a general or king, like a man with some great scheme in hand, like a man who expected to be obeyed.

I burnt the remains of the plant and returned to the sick-room, where Alice was still sleeping peacefully. My anxiety was now almost over, and I was so worn-out that I believe I must have had forty winks soon after sitting down. I was awakened with a start by a loud hammering at the front-door, and the same noise awoke my patient. It was a peaceful awakening, for all pain and feverishness had gone, whilst the opening of her soft, grey eyes was like new life to me. She looked into my face, and then at once stretched out her arms with childlike impulsiveness.

"You have suffered—for me," she said. And in a moment I had my arms round her, for I saw that she was mine. We had a minute in Heaven—or in the best heaven on this side the grave—and then the door opened.

It was Mr. Manters, and he certainly caught his doctor in a decidedly unprofessional attitude. But he only said quietly:

"Doctor, I wish you would go and see Captain Sylten. I'm afraid he's going mad."

"Is he at home?"

"No, in our garden, looking round for some plant or other."

I went down, but just as I reached the garden the Captain hurried out of the gate as if he had not a minute to lose. I re-entered the house to bid adieu to my friends, and then I returned to the inn to snatch a little rest. I was doomed to disappointment, however, for, after a brief hour's sleep, I was awakened and told I was urgently wanted by Captain Sylten.

I encountered a strange scene. The Captain lay on his bed going through all the distortions of body which poor Sybil had shown, and with a most horrible look on his face. The expression was not altogether caused by suffering, for it was a mixture of cruelty and cunning, to which was added the look of a baffled villain.

One of the local doctors was there, looking perplexed and helpless; but what surprised me most was the presence of Rithers.

"It is the old trouble," whispered the doctor; "but there are hallucinations added. He seems worse than any of the others."

He was right in the latter part, for the man seemed mad with anger, apart from the pain. The language he used would have shocked a trooper, and all the time he was twisting and being twisted with pain like a wounded worm.

"Mr. Rithers found him in the fields in a pitiable condition and brought him home, so he has conceived the idea that Mr. Rithers has murdered him. I mention this to you, but I would not repeat the matter outside, for there is so little known about this epidemic that people will believe anything. It is no good my staying, and I have other patients to attend to, so you'll excuse my leaving you."

I could see he wanted to shift a hopeless case on to other shoulders, but I let him go, and then Rithers and I were alone with the patient.

"He did it. He murdered me," shrieked the Captain, with intermixed oaths. "See that he is hanged, Doctor. See that he is swung like a felon."

I looked at Rithers, and he came forward.

"The Captain is partly right," he said; "but I am his executioner, not his

murderer. There was only one bunch of the Indian dock in the garden, and you have cured Alice with that; for I dug it up to see if that tortured hound knew its value. He did, for, when I called on him last night and slashed him across the face with one of the hell flowers, he waited until I had gone and then crept out for the antidote. I was waiting among the bushes to see what he would do, and he almost went mad before the poison had time to act. He conceived the idea that I had transplanted it, and all night he followed me round, searching gardens for the missing plant. He hasn't exactly enjoyed himself these last few hours."

The Captain rose as if about to spring on his tormentor and tear him to pieces, but a spasm doubled him up and he writhed on in agony.

"They would only have hanged you," Rithers went on, speaking to the Captain, "if I had told them of your tricks; and that was too good for you. You know now how your poor victims suffered, and I have at last avenged Sybil's death. No. I shall feel no remorse."

The Captain's struggles grew weaker, and at last Rithers took my arm.

"He's past talking now," he said. "We can leave him to die—to die alone."

The Captain replied with a horrible look on his face, but he was too tormented to speak, so we sent up his servant and left the house.

"It can't bring back Sybil—it can't bring back my darling," groaned Rithers, when we got into the fresh air. And then I saw that he had relapsed into his old state of grief. He had executed vengeance, but his loss still bore him down.

I never saw him again, for he left Radderford the next day; but I stayed on, and am staying on still. I bought the Captain's house and induced Alice Manters to share it with me, and she and others, who have since come to brighten our home, share it with me still.

The hell flower was a plant which grew quickly and faded soon, for by the time I had taken possession it had disappeared. I watched for its reappearance in the following Spring, meaning to burn not only it but its roots and the surrounding soil. It did not spring up, however, so I could only conclude that it was an annual, and that the Captain had taken the trouble to propagate fresh plants from seeds. The little pity I felt for him quickly vanished.

His Neighbours. * * *

* * * By GRACE EBRIGHT.

The surprise ending to a very awkward love problem.

STEPHEN FORREST deplored the onward rush of civilisation towards his little corner of the world. It had, up to the nine-and-twentieth year of his life, been an ideal home for him.

He loved the quiet wilderness that broke in waves of green glory at the confines of his estate. He was at once lord of his own manor and free, as well, to roam at will over the miles of neighbouring country. His restless spirit, chafing sometimes at too long and arduous confinement at his editorial desk in town, here found speedy balm in the bracing woodland tramps his place of residence afforded.

True, the electric trams in recent years had begun to run within a short distance of his roomy house. But that was really a comfort, and a decided convenience when he did not care to wait for suburban trains. And so, with all the stern cares of fatiguing journalism, he was fully content with life and at peace with all the world.

With what misgivings, selfish displeasure and growing animosity, then, did he unwillingly witness the breaking of ground for a house near his fair garden of peace.

The site selected was an all too neighbourly one to Forrest's fancy:

Full soon the house was completed, and with the coming of Summer came the new neighbours—a man, a wife, a baby, and three servants, he was told, and their name was Preston.

For the first two weeks after their arrival Forrest's knowledge of them was limited to a speaking acquaintance with the head of the household, a fine-looking, sturdy fellow, big of body and healthy of colour. A man whose smart clothes made a decidedly unfavourable comparison with the plainer, seedier garb of Forrest, who felt the comparison and at once entered another grudge in the wedge of antipathy against the newcomer. He had never cared for fashion in clothes. It smacked of the effeminate to him.

At the end of the second week, late in the afternoon, Forrest sat reading an absorbing

book in the dusty, fragrant coolness of his great, green garden.

Suddenly a burst of joyous song reached him. A woman's voice, exquisite, contralto, full of strangely beautiful cadences, was caroling "Philip, My King," on the evening air.

The quality of the voice, more than the song itself, woke Forrest to alertness. He closed his book promptly and leant forward breathlessly.

In a moment he saw her, the singer. She was coming down the leafy path of his neighbour's garden, walking slowly, singing happily, swinging a baby on her arm.

She was clad in a pink-flowered, short-sleeved gown, and looked to Forrest's wondering vision like a nymph of the woods.

Her walk was grace itself; her figure slender and perfect in its carriage. Her face was turned to the little child, that, by some curious fashion, she was holding secure in the outspread palm and fingers of her firm left hand, its tiny body lying along her arm, her right-hand fingers clutching its billowy skirts.

It was a trick Forrest had seen mothers do before; it had always had a nervous fascination for him. Now he thought only of the grace of this woman's whole attire.

Once she swung the child up, away up, as the sweet rhythm of a note dwelt for a moment on the balmy evening air, and a gurgle of baby laughter met and mingled with its exquisite fibre.

Forrest was touched to the heart with an unknown, queer feeling:

The next moment she had seen him, and had read his bewildered expression and the closed book at one glance.

"Oh, I am sorry I disturbed you." She paused beside the low, green hedge to say in a candid voice, quite as musical as the song had been: "I did not know you were here. I was trying to amuse the baby."

Forrest got awkwardly to his feet. He was watching her wonderful face hungrily as she spoke. No face in all the world

had ever held him thus. No woman had ever won from him more than a passing glance. This one was different. Her whole being bespoke health and grace and fragrant beauty, crowned with the glory of gentle womanliness.

He continued to stare stupidly at her for a moment after she spoke, and then he said, with increasing awkwardness:

"You did not annoy me, I assure you. I liked the song very much."

For the first time in his life he struggled for words in which to pay tribute to a woman. Also, for the first time in his life, he felt awkward and ill at ease. He could not understand it.

"It is generous of you to say so," she replied; "but I shall remember in the future to be assured that I have no audience before I sing to Philip."

"In that case," returned Forrest gravely, "I shall conceal myself somewhere, just out of sight, but in hearing."

He scarcely knew what he said. He only felt a vague fear that for some reason his presence here had made her ill at ease. He wanted to banish that feeling.

She smiled again and, turning, walked slowly, gracefully away, the baby's round face cuddled close to her own; its wondering, dark eyes looked back at Forrest over her shoulder; one small arm incircled her white neck; one little hand outspread in dimpled loveliness among the riot of pink roses that lay on the shoulder of the woman's gown.

And still Forrest stood and stared.

It was the coming of Preston that awoke him—Preston, who slammed the little white gate in the green hedge at the side of the garden, and, breaking into a run, overtook the woman and the child before they reached the turn that would shut them from Forrest's view.

"Virginia!" called Preston, in his big, hearty voice, "wait a moment."

She halted and awaited his impetuous arrival, and Forrest clutched at the high back of his garden seat and watched him while a strange rage kindled in his bosom against the man. He envied him and loathed him.

The brief second's speech with the woman, the short time he had feasted his hungry eyes on her wonderful beauty, had forever wrecked the quiet peace of his heart. He had never been in love, but now he felt a strange longing in his heart to see her again, to have her near him, to listen to her voice.

Preston took the baby from her arms and smothered its little face with kisses, and then tossed it so high in the air that Forrest trembled and the baby screamed in joy. Then he shook it and swung it about and strode round the bend in the road, the woman following.

Forrest felt foolishly glad it had been the baby and not the wife that he had seen caressed with such wild abandonment of love. That other he could not have looked at.

A shudder seized him. He turned to the house, his book lying neglected on the grass by the bench. All the world seemed to have darkened and lost its beauty.

No book that evening could quiet his restlessness. He was wakeful far into the night. And in the troubled dreams that came in the short sleep before dawn, the vision of a woman's face smiled at him; a face of creamy pinkness, with strangely beautiful, dark eyes, and a wide, scarlet mouth that had alluring curves in it.

It was the drowsy chattering and chirping of birds that awakened him in the early morning. He ate a poor breakfast, and, going out into the garden, began a solitary, troubled walk up and down its green borders. He saw one of his beloved books lying as he had dropped it last night. Its grey and carmine cover was stained and blistered with the dew; yet it is proof of his entire absorption that he passed it by uncomprehendingly.

And then he saw her again. She was there before him. A blackbird was gurgling and thrilling silvery notes overhead somewhere in the leafy canopy.

The woman stood leaning a little forward in rapt attention, her lips half-parted and dewy, her eyes sparkling.

She was instantly aware of Forrest's approach, yet she did not turn until the blackbird's riot of melody was ended; then she returned his grave "Good-morning!" with a gay smile and a light-hearted manner.

How was she to know what tragedies were consuming this earnest man?

"Doesn't this surpass any human song?" she asked enthusiastically.

Forrest walked nearer to the low, green hedge and said seriously: "I liked your song better." He was too entirely unsophisticated to mean it for flattery. He was terribly in earnest. Nevertheless, she dropped her head a trifle and moved a little away from him.

"That could hardly be possible, I think," she said coldly.

"But indeed it is," he hastened to assure her. "After one has heard blackbirds all one's life, they are not so likely to charm."

She ignored the veiled compliment.

"It is quite the reverse with me. I have always lived in town," she said. And then, as a breakfast-bell sounded faintly in the distance, she turned to go. Her "Good-bye!" and her bright smile left him dazed and trembling; and his heart beat so loudly he wondered if she had heard it.

Then the whole truth unfolded itself to him: He had fallen in love since yesterday—but with whom? His neighbour's wife! And the despair of the tragedy crushed him.

An honourable ancestry, a clean life, were his salvation. His instant resolve was to bravely bear his destiny. There could be no harm in the cruel fate of loving her; the harm would arise in the attempt to awake an answering love in the woman. He would be cautious and discreet. He would avoid her.

Yet he did not. In the ensuing weeks he haunted his garden early and late. Stronger than the call of Nature had ever been to lure him to her haunts was the call his soul felt for this one woman in all the world. Her beauty, her wonderful colouring, her soft, shining hair were in his mental vision constantly.

He grew thin and restless. His only moments of pleasure were the times he would find her sitting or walking in her garden. Yet he was not bold. It sufficed him to sit here, divided from paradise by a low, green hedge, and watch her as she sewed, or hear her discuss books, plays, the world. It was joy unspeakable only to hear her talk.

The wonder that Preston did not show attention at first excited pity in Stephen Forrest's breast, but the ultimate end was that he was glad, glad of it. His own adoring spirit humbly followed her, attending and guarding her jealously where the husband should have been but was not.

I do not know how long Forrest's passion would have been content to worship platonically. The change was sharp and effectual.

He happened on a picture one day in a private gallery, "*The Perfect Kiss of Love*." It was the story of love, written as all the world might read it: love in ecstasy, abandonment, fulness.

Forrest looked and looked again at the woman's soft, white throat, her shining hair,

her strong, white hands, and at the man whose hungry kiss was pressed to her scarlet mouth, whose arms enfolded her in love's caress; and he read Preston's wife in the woman's portrait and—it came as a shock to him—not Preston, but himself in the portrait of the man!

For the first time he saw clearly the dear possibilities of love, a privilege denied him. The fires of his passion burnt deep into his soul after that. And, like a stinging whip-lash to his conscience, came the warning: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife."

It had come to this, then. Heretofore he had envied Preston his cheerful home life with its rich joys; now he found himself blindly wanting Preston's wife. In his mind he was already guilty of the sin of winning her love.

And then he was ashamed—heartily ashamed and sorry. He resolved to fight down the memory of his wicked thought. He would go back to the peaceful days of platonic friendship and be brave and strong.

Yet his very next meeting with her was fraught with the worst peril of all. She came down her garden path at eventide, calling to him to return a book he had lent her. He was pale and trembling as he walked unsteadily to the hedge. She was gowned in white, a soft, clinging frock, all richly embroidered. Little Philip lay contentedly against her breast.

As the book changed hands, their fingers touched, the accident of Forrest's unnerved state. The contact shocked him with its very gentleness. The book dropped. He stooped to recover it, and then the scarlet of his face gave way to ashen whiteness as he noted that her whole face was flushed also. Her glance wavered, then fell in confusion.

"I am sorry!" stammered Forrest guiltily, then he wondered why he said it. The very climax of his tragedy was reached in this one moment when he read in her tell-tale face that she, too, loved him.

He could not trust himself to speak again. He looked one moment in agony at her downcast face, then turned and left her. Once for all, he resolved now that henceforth he would avoid her. They must not mar their love with wrong to themselves and another.

And then began days of torment whose like he had never conceived that man could suffer and yet live. He could not bear to speak to Preston. He schemed to avoid the very train that took his neighbour home at night. He dreaded lest the husband

should discover his secret in some thoughtless word or act.

But in spite of his efforts to avoid Preston, they accosted each other one evening in town. Forrest was on his way to catch the late suburban train, when a hurried and familiar stride was heard behind him. He quickened his pace guiltily, and felt strangely shaken as Preston hastened also and, laying a strong right hand on his shoulder, said hurriedly :

"Hold on a moment, Forrest."

The man addressed almost collapsed.

The face he turned to Preston was drawn and ghastly:

"Good Heavens, man, aren't you well?" gasped Preston.

Forrest smiled faintly from sheer relief.

"Oh, pretty well. I expect it's the confounded heat," he replied thickly, taking off his hat and pushing back his dark hair.

"You'd better take things a bit easier till the weather gets cooler. I expect your work's pretty trying in this heat. Where have you been hiding yourself lately? Virginia told me to tell you to come over and spend an occasional evening with us; she said she was afraid you must be lonely, but, to tell the truth, I think it's Virginia who's a little lonely, only she won't let on. She's the finest girl in the world—almost, is Virginia. I don't know what I'd do without her."

Genuine emotion kindled Preston's speech: They had reached the station and had entered their train as he was speaking.

"You say your wife sent for me?" was all that Forrest could ejaculate.

"No, not my wife—Virginia, my wife's sister, Miss Arnold. Surely she told me you knew each other?"

Forrest sank into the seat nearest him and sat agape and wide-eyed. He fancied his heart stopped beating for several seconds:

Preston gave him a quick shake.

"Man, what is wrong? Are you ill?" he asked in consternation.

Forrest gasped as one just recovered from mortal peril.

"No, no, believe me. I am well, well and sound. It was only the heat. See, I am all right."

His words grew gradually normal, hearty: He gripped Preston's arm wildly as a small vent to his consuming emotions.

"Tell me about Miss Virginia," he said humbly.

And while the train rumbled out of town, he told him of Virginia.

"She's been with us ever since Philip came—my wife hasn't been well since and Virginia fancied no one else ought to have the privilege of caring for the two of them. She has nursed Anna and coddled little Phil till the youngster fancies he has two mothers. I think I owe it to Virginia that Anna is getting strong again. She has infused part of her own splendid self into my poor little woman, till within the last few days I can see her blossoming out like the buds on a tree.

"Virginia's as proud as can be that she has Anna out-of-doors at last. Anna says she kept telling her about the delights of our new garden till she just had to get well enough and go out and see for herself. And being out-of-doors has cured her. I thank Heaven for the day I resolved to bring her out of town. And I thank Heaven for Virginia's generous help in bringing her back to health:

"What could I have done, tied to the office all day as I am? All the nurses in the country wouldn't have been the comfort Virginia has been. She is one of the noblest and best women I ever knew. I want you to know her better, Forrest. You'll find her a clever companion. And you must meet my wife. You've missed something in life not to have met my little woman—she's the sweetest and bravest little girl in the world, and God knows how glad I am that she is getting strong again."

Forrest wondered how he had ever fancied his young neighbour heartless. His whole face kindled as he spoke of the one he loved with such deep and tender passion.

As for Forrest, he seemed drifting in the clouds, his heart was so light and happy. The wonderful joy that kept singing in his heart almost consumed him. He felt that the train had never been so slow; he wanted to get home, to hasten to see her. He did not cherish the shadow of a doubt against her attitude towards him: He felt quite certain of it:

He ate his dinner hastily that evening: The hour he spent in dressing was one of torment to him. He quarreled with his man and told him he knew full well that he had a better stock of ties and collars than was arranged for his selection.

He wondered why he had not replaced his best evening clothes with something newer, and blamed his man for letting him go so shabby. The man bore the unusual burst of temper unwinkingly, discreetly. He even forbore to remind his master of the

hundreds of unheeded hints on dressing he had so often given him.

Forrest was nervous and ill at ease as he went up the smooth pathway to Preston's house, in the dusk of evening. The verandah was flooded with light from within, and as he came nearer he saw that Preston was sitting with his arm round a woman in white in a low chair near him. Preston jumped up at the sound of footsteps, and rushed boyishly to meet his visitor.

"It took you the dickens of a long time to call on your neighbours, but I'm very glad you've come at last. You can't fancy how lonely we get sometimes," he said genially. He led Forrest up to the woman.

"Anna, this is our next-door and only neighbour—my wife, Mr. Forrest."

Forrest felt strangely humble as he bent over the low chair and took the slender fingers of her hand for a moment in his own.

This, then, was Preston's wife. Not the splendid woman of his adoration, but a slight, winsome being with wondering eyes, as the baby's eyes, and lighter colouring than Virginia—a softer-toned shadow of her sister, she seemed.

And as the three of them chatted together in the twilight, Forrest saw how dependent and clinging she was as she nestled, a slender, girlish figure, into Preston's protecting arm, while he wrapped her up in a white shawl and guarded her jealously from a possible breeze.

Presently Preston voiced the question that had been tormenting Forrest's heart all along:

"Where is Virginia?"

"In the garden somewhere. I wish you'd call her, dear. I get nervous when she stays out in the dew and dark so long," said Mrs. Preston with a little shiver.

"May I go to her? I think I know where to find her," Forrest asked.

He had risen at once. He was not even nervous as he put the question. He was too happy.

They smiled at him as they sent him to bring in the wanderer. He was smiling, too, calm and content and joyous as he walked rapidly off into the moonlight.

The path was darkened by the trees, whose branches interlaced above. Everything seemed strangely, sweetly quiet. His own footfall was almost noiseless on the thick turf.

She was standing in gentle reverie, quite at the end of the garden path, very near the beginning of his own; almost as he had

left her standing that day which now seemed eternities ago. She was dressed in white to-night also; an evening gown all lacey and filmy that gave her more than ever the appearance of an airy wood nymph. Her shoulders gleamed white here in the moonlight, her hands were clasped together on the back of the rustic garden chair where she had so often sat and talked across the hedge with him.

Forrest had been quite calm, he clearly had meant to stop and say to her rationally: "Miss Arnold, your sister sent me to bring you in." But as he neared her he lost all trace of reserve. One feeling alone pervaded him. It was love, primeval and powerful:

He trembled and grew pale.

"Virginia," he said.

It was a quick, yearning call. He scarce recognised it for his own.

She lifted her head and turned to him with a little, startled cry. She put one white hand quickly to her throat and then both arms fell mutely to her sides.

Her eyes were starry. He stepped impetuously nearer and saw the faint stirring of laces on her bosom, and the half-parted witchery of her scarlet mouth, with its alluring curves.

He did not remember how it happened. He only knew she did not in any way resist him as he put out his arms hungrily and drew her to him. He only knew that the dearest moment of his life had come. A great, surging sea of joy enveloped them. He felt her soft arms about his neck. He drew her head backwards into the curved palms of his two hands so that her throat gleamed white in the moonlight, and then he kissed the wonderful mouth again and again.

"Dear, I love you!" he said reverently.

Her radiant face smiled into his own.

"I knew you did; you—you will not think me foolish if I tell you that I have loved you since first I saw you, over there in your garden, reading. I never believed in such things before, but that is when I began to love you." She said it earnestly:

"And that is the very day my love for you began, too," he said happily; "only it took me a day to find out that it was love."

And then he gravely told her of the miserable mistake that he feared had wrecked their happiness.

After that they went back to the two on the verandah, hand in hand, along the green path down which she had once walked straight into his heart.

The Great Cumblemoor Run.

* * * * * By W. H. KOEBEL.

The story of a foxhunt and its consequences to a vixen and three cubs, two city clerks, and, incidentally, to two other young people.

THE record of the Cumblemoor run is to be found in the annals of no existing hunt. The omission is the more regrettable in that it contained features of interest that the most famous pack in the land could scarcely afford.

That James Sedger and Albert Johnson possessed sporting tendencies was undeniable. Yet it was the fate of each to sit for lengthy hours upon a tall stool in the City. Such is the lot of some whose very marrows respond to the call of country pursuits.

Their Summer vacation they had been wont to spend by the side of a brick-edged sea. Yet the time came when they rebelled even against boarding-houses, piers, and nigger minstrels. In search of adventure, they made a bold move. One Summer's morning they found themselves within the old hostelry that catered for the few wants of the small village of Someleigh, with its sprinkling of thatched roofs.

They knew they had found the atmosphere they sought. They knew, further, that they had tuned their personalities in accordance. They wore Norfolk jackets, with stockings, one day, and with riding-breeches the next. Yet there was something wanting.

"Lanes and banks, and more lanes and more banks, with a bit of moor at the back—it isn't altogether what I should call satisfying," meditated James Sedger on the third evening, as the pair were seated within the bar-parlour of the "George."

Johnson nodded.

"What about a bit of fishing?" he suggested.

The other laughed in derision.

"I'd sooner sit down at the office and be paid for it than hold a stick with a bit of string at the end of it, and catch nothing but a cold."

Johnson's eyes lit upon an old print that faced him upon the wall.

It depicted a pack of hounds in full cry: Johnson sat erect in his chair.

"What about a day with the hounds?" he cried.

Sedger gazed at him open-mouthed. Then his eyes reflected the light that shone in the other's.

"Ah!" he said emphatically. "Now you're talking!"

There was a momentous pause:

"There's three dogs belonging to this very place," said Sedger at length; "if they aren't foxhounds, that picture over there prevaricates. As for horses, there's two in the stable that look as if they'd been hunted all their lives."

"P'raps," said Albert Johnson, when the plan had fully matured, "it 'ud be better if we didn't say anything to anybody about what we're going to do. When we've got the fox, that'll be the time for talking, not before."

From which speech it was evident that an admirable spirit pervaded the pair.

The sun beat down next morning upon the balmy atmosphere of early June. An hour after breakfast the hostler at the "George" inn was watching, with puckered brows, the receding figures of two horsemen.

"When I asked 'em which was ter ride the chestnut, an' which the roan, they looked all strook aback like," he confided to a friend. "They've borrowed the three old beagles and master's whip. What for? I danno! Judgin' from their seats they're either American jockeys, or else—well, I'll give that up, too!"

Unconscious of these doubtful comments, the two huntsmen drew out from the village of Someleigh. The three beagles preceded them. Comforted by the futile passage of the whip through the air, they ambled along in slow content.

"Can't you make it crack?" demanded Johnson. "Well, it doesn't matter," he added rapidly, as a final attempt on the part of Sedger sent the thong within an inch of his nose.

They entered a narrow, high-banked lane. The noses of the little hounds dropped nearer to the ground. Their tails waved higher in the air. Johnson took a fresh grip of the reins.

"Look out!" he cried in warning. "Something might happen at any moment now!"

Sedger looked anxiously at the banks to right and left.

"Supposing," he returned, "that they got off the road."

"We shall have to go after 'em," replied Johnson firmly; "nobody says anything about trespassing, so long as you're out with the hounds."

Towards the end of the lane the bank dipped until a low hedge alone separated them from a field of young wheat, at the back of which showed the purple of the moor. The beagles had grown more agitated. Suddenly they scrambled through the hedge. The two riders gazed at each other in doubt.

"Come along!" cried Sedger.

He applied his knees with a convulsive, inward pressure. Then he brought down his crop. The stock struck his own horse, the thong lit upon the roan that bore Johnson. Both horses rose, taking the low obstacle at a standing jump.

"Hulloa!" exclaimed Sedger. It seemed to him that he was rising unnecessarily high. He accompanied the landing with a grunt that was smothered among the hairs of the chestnut's mane. After a while he looked about him.

Johnson was rising to his knees upon the soft ground. The exact reason of his fall was ever afterwards a mystery to him. Two years before, both Sedger and he had desired to join the Mounted Infantry. Ere the abandonment of the plan each had undergone a course of a dozen riding-lessons. Each had been charged the same price, therefore why had he fallen? or rather—why had Sedger remained?

It was some while ere he was in the saddle once more. The three beagles were giving tongue now. Although they traveled cumbrously, after the manner of their kind, they had gained a long lead in the interval.

"Well, I never!" cried Johnson. "They've found it!"

They started forward over the field.

"There's a man over there waving and shouting!" exclaimed Sedger.

"I s'pose we ought to wave back!" gasped his friend. "It may be the proper thing to do, but I'm not going to take any risks!" he cried, as he lurched at the point where his mount broke into a canter.

Inspired by the music to the front, the pair sped onwards.

* * * * *

Lufton Hanshawe and Mabel Spurrow

were walking their horses side by side on the edge of the moor. They had ridden thus for a good many days. It was Hanshawe's most cherished desire that many more should be added to the number. It was, indeed, nothing beyond a morbid dread lest these rides should cease that had kept him silent—when he longed to speak.

As the two pushed slowly onwards, there came a sudden call of a hound from behind a neighbouring fringe of trees. Then sounded another, then a thin chorus. The horses pricked their ears; the riders stared at each other in amazement.

"Hounds! *Running!*" he exclaimed. "And in June!"

Mabel Spurrow's pretty face expressed open incredulity.

"But— isn't that impossible?" she cried.

The sound was drawing nearer. Hanshawe gave a sudden shout.

"Good Heavens! Look there!" he cried.

A vixen had crawled through a gap in the hedge that bordered the moor. About her were three cubs. She turned to make towards a copse that lay behind the two riders. Then, at sight of them, she turned off, shepherding her youngsters through the heather of the moor.

A minute later the three beagles emerged from the same gap. Without a doubt they were very busy. They gave out a fresh burst of tongue as they lumbered onwards. Hanshawe, reining in his dancing horse, began to laugh.

"Was there ever such a sight?" he gasped. "Beagles, baby-foxes, and a vixen! Undoubtedly a real hunt!"

He ceased his laughter in order to listen. The pounding of hoofs sounded from the other side of the hedge. From out of the same gap that had sent forth vixen, cubs, and beagles appeared Sedger and Johnson. They drew out into the open, rolling in grim earnest in their saddles. It is possible that some memories of old had quickened the roan and the chestnut to new life. They were straining hard at their bits. The faces of both riders had grown pallid. The lash of Sedger's whip trailed out from behind as he swept onwards.

It was a spectacle to be remembered. Lufton Hanshawe's eyes rested in bewilderment upon it for a while. Then he turned to his companion. But the final apparition had proved too much for Mabel's horse. Swinging round with a plunge, he started off with the bit in his teeth. Despite all

Mabel's endeavours, in another couple of seconds he had firmly established the advantage he had gained. He swung over the heather in the wake of the roan and the chestnut.

Hanshawe was left no choice but to follow. He took a line well to the left of the rest, for he feared to bustle Mabel's horse. Thus the four went pounding onwards along a downward slope.

To the front the three tails of the beagles waved in a paroxysm of enthusiasm. It may be that their owners realised that this opportunity was the one in their lifetime. Each did his best to make a foxhound of himself for the occasion. Nevertheless, the gap between them and the riders rapidly lessened.

For a couple of minutes the riders galloped unchecked. Mabel's horse drew abreast of the roan and the chestnut. Then, sprinting clear, it had left the two older nags well in the rear.

As he peered ahead, Hanshawe's face assumed a quick, anxious look. He steered his mount to close in with that of Mabel. Before them, he knew, lay a deep ditch, hidden though it was by the heather. Its position was marked by a high bank of soil, in part heather-covered, in part bare save for the round, grey pebbles that littered its surface. It was a spot which many a hard rider would have preferred at his back rather than before him.

Mabel's horse had just drawn level with the beagles when an entirely unexpected event occurred. The strange pack disappeared—literally into the bowels of the earth. Right across their path lurked a narrow, hidden pit; one of the cubs had fallen into the tiny abyss. The vixen, at bay, stayed upon the edge. Upon their arrival the beagles charged in upon the unfortunate family. Beagles, vixen, and cubs disappeared in a deadly struggle headlong down the hole.

It was just then that Sedger and Johnson caught their first glimpse of the broad, banked ditch that confronted them. The eyes of both dilated.

"Whoa!" implored Sedger:

"Whoa!" imitated Johnson:

The voices were tremulous. They essayed a final tug at the reins. The effort, beyond causing a risky unsettlement of their balance, availed nothing.

Hanshawe, after a moment's hesitation, sat down to ride his horse. He swept across Mabel's line a bare halfdozen lengths in front:

"This way!" he shouted. "Follow me!"

He made for a spot where the bank was lowest. He reined in hard after he had landed with a scramble upon the further side. Mabel's horse was rising to the obstacle at hurdle-race speed. Then he had pecked badly. Hanshawe's heart stood still. For one moment he thought that the animal was about to turn turtle. As luck would have it, he came sliding down, pushing a grinding heap of loose stones before him with his knees.

Hanshawe had already slipped from the saddle. Ere the floundering horse had fully recovered its balance, he had grasped the rein. A second later Mabel was standing on firm earth by his side.

"Oh, but you frightened me!" he cried. "I feared for just one moment that——"

He paused in amazement. He discovered that in the midst of his emotion he had flung his arm about the girl. She had been a little white of face; now she was rosy! He looked into her eyes, and—Hanshawe blessed a stumbling horse.

Some minutes elapsed ere he thought of the others. Of neither huntsman was there a sign. On the near side of the bank the chestnut was nibbling between the patches of heather; the roan was gazing discontentedly over the obstacle that still faced him.

At length he came upon Sedger. The dismounted enthusiast was lying at full-length, gazing skyward. A stirrup-iron with the leather trailing from it still incircled one foot. At the same moment a head rose slowly from the other side of the bank. Johnson clambered over on hands and knees. Though his back was dusty, his countenance was radiant.

"Seeing what was going to happen, I tumbled off on the other side," he explained, addressing Hanshawe; "and I suppose this is the end of the hunt."

Sedger drew himself to a sitting position. He gazed about him rather wildly:

"Where's the death?" he asked:

"The *what*?" demanded Hanshawe:

"The death!" repeated Sedger: "Where's the fox and his tail, and all the rest of it?"

Hanshawe began to comprehend. The beagles were invisible, but from the ground near by came the sound of worrying. He flung towards Sedger the reins of the two horses he was leading. Then he ran to the hole and peered downwards.

The victory of the beagles had been hard won. There were bites and marks of blood upon their coats. But they had achieved their end. The vixen and the cubs had gone to another hunting-ground.

Hanshawe flung the beagles, one by one, from out of the hole. He returned with a gloomy countenance.

"You ought to be shot, both of you—if you intended it!" he exclaimed. "But I confess I don't understand. Was it the result of an accident?"

"What! Our hunt?" retorted Johnson indignantly. "Well—that's pretty cool!"

They explained. Hanshawe had all the hunting man's horror of the crime he had seen committed. Yet, as they proceeded, he grinned in spite of himself. Ere they had finished he was leaning against the bank, holding his sides.

Of a sudden he grew grave. The horrible, criminal waste of the thing struck him once more. But his eye met Mabel's; and he felt it was good to laugh that day.

Then in his turn he spoke. In the course of his explanation the complacency of Sedger and Johnson vanished utterly. So crestfallen was their mien that Hanshawe found himself filled with compassion.

"I will say nothing about it," he assured them, "for—various reasons." He glanced towards Mabel, who blushed again. "Place three feet of earth above that martyred vixen! Brush up the beagles and yourselves—and go home in peace. But not a word about it, mind! Not to a soul!"

"I suppose," said Sedger, with diffidence, "that it wouldn't matter in London—just in our office?"

Hanshawe laughed again:

"No," he said, "I don't think it would matter there."

That is the reason why Cumblemoor knows nothing of the run that should be the most famous in its annals. And in London—at the office—they are no better off. They won't believe a word of it.

The Big Tin Box. ❖ ❖ ❖

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ By ARTHUR APPLIN.

A pathetic glimpse into a man's forgotten youth.

"WHERE on earth can that letter have gone?" said the man irritably.

"You probably destroyed it long ago," replied his wife, from the depths of the rose-pink chintz cushions of the Chesterfield.

"I shoved it away somewhere," growled the man, banging the drawer of his escritoire so fiercely that the marble figure of the dancing girl tottered dangerously. "I know I shoved it away somewhere!"

"Perhaps it's in that big tin box in your dressing-room," yawned the wife. "I wish you wouldn't fuss so!"

"Awfully sorry," said the man, affectionately smoothing the pretty, doll-like face and the sleek, fair hair that peeped above a sea of cushions. "But those infernal solicitors insist on seeing it."

He disappeared from the room for a few moments, and returned carrying a great tin case, very old, very dusty.

He put it on the big arm-chair by the fireside, and kneeling down unlocked and opened it. His wife sighed and shut her eyes.

"Don't make an awful litter, Jack," she groaned; "once a man begins to turn out—"

But the husband did not hear her. He had thrown back the lid of the box, and thrust his hand into the dusty mixture of manuscripts, letters, ball and theatre programmes, and race cards—and he found that he had suddenly dived into the arms of the forgotten things of youth.

The forgotten things of youth!

There they all lay quivering beneath his hands, and he had thought that they were dead; he had believed that they died when he was married, eight years ago.

Eight years ago—it seemed a lifetime now. Yet he wasn't really so very old, barely forty. But the gulf that divides twenty and forty is a very broad one.

He glanced at his wife and withdrew his hands from the box, intending to shut it and lock it and hide it away again.

Her blue eyes were closed, her pale lips were parted in a placid smile, her delicate, white hands folded complacently.

The man sighed and took a deep breath, and his wife started.

"Did you sigh—good gracious, what's the matter?"

"The door creaked," he whispered.

"If I fall asleep, wake me up before you go to bed," she said, sinking back again among the cushions.

The man grunted, and once more his hands wandered among the papers, stirring them lightly, almost tenderly. And as he stirred them they emitted peculiar, subtle perfumes; each perfume was distinct, possessing a personality of its own:

The perfume of the past!

Each was the scent of a certain day, the perfume of a forgotten night, the memory of a friend, a lover!

The forgotten things of youth!

He made one more attempt to shut the box, in vain.

Then he boldly took out a little bundle of letters tied with a faded bit of narrow blue ribbon.

The letters were alive, they quivered in his hands; so was the ribbon. As he untied it, it wriggled and twisted itself up until it spelt a name: "Betty!"

"What a pretty name."

"How often you used to say that," sighed the letter.

"Hush! My wife will hear! And it happened so long ago. I was nineteen—but we mustn't think of those days now!"

"Let us remember them for a moment," sighed the letters. "Your wife didn't exist then—she is asleep now, and I have been buried here so long, and I've felt so lonely. Talk to me for a little while!"

"How happy we were!"

"And how mad! Do you remember the *bal-masqué*?"

"Could I forget! That's where I met you—you wore a blue domino and a pink dress—what lovely little ankles you had, Betty!"

"I remember your hair was very short and very curly! You were ashamed of the curls and always tried to brush them out—"

"And your hair was dark—do you remember the day I was very bold, and stole the hairpins one by one, and then let your hair roll like a wild river down your back until it nearly reached the floor?"

"That was the first time you kissed me!"

"Do you know that you were the first woman I ever kissed, Betty?"

"Of course I knew!"

"The scent of your hair is just the same now as it was twenty years ago?"

"Just the same!"

"Are your eyes the same colour, Betty—that dear, deep brown? Are your cheeks as soft and rosy, and your lips as full and red, and your limbs as round? Betty, don't go away—"

Here was a solitary little letter lying on the man's knee, written in a round, childish hand. He picked it up—his fingers trembled unsteadily now. It was a crumpled, stained, scentless letter. It was addressed to "My dearest brother."

I got your very sweet letter this morning and am so glad you like your school. I send you two little cannons and a pack of cards, I thought they would amuse you, dear. We have been in the lanes this afternoon and picked a lot of white violets. We took Dolly and the cart—"

Dolly? Of course Dolly was the donkey! Dear old Dolly!

I went up to your garden this morning and everything looks very well. I wish I could come up on Saturday, but I've got my old astronomy. Jack and Ben and Roy were washed this morning. Ben was all over little curls, he did look so pretty. Do not let anyone see this letter. I must say good-bye now, darling. Your loving sister, MELONIE.

Melonie, his only sister. Poor little Melonie: The case grew misty, but his hands dived deeper.

More letters, from strangers:

I have just read your story in *The ——— Magazine*, so beautiful—

The man sighed. He had dreamt of fame then; he thought he could write, he thought he was going to be great, he had seen an admiring public at his feet:

But now there were only these halfdozen letters—four from women, two from men:

His little public of six:

He had kept their letters for twenty years, the letters of his unknown, unseen admirers—foolish girls, perhaps, and sentimental boys. But he had loved them for writing to him, he loved them still! He put them carefully back into the case, though not without a feeling of shame.

Still, nobody knew!

He glanced at his wife; she was deep in sleep, and the pink cushions:

Here were three programmes, an artificial rose and a tiny lace handkerchief tied together. They smelt strongly of—of—what was it?

Red Roses? Ruby! Of course, Ruby:

A queer smile parted his lips—a very queer smile.

The programmes, the rose, and the handkerchief held such a queer, virgin romance.

"Tell me all about it again," he whispered. "Who were you, Ruby, and where are you now?"

"I've been hidden away too long to tell you anything!"

"I loved you, Ruby, or did I dream that I loved you? I was twenty-one, remember."

"I nearly loved you!"

"Nearly?"

"It was too late for me to love anyone."

"But you told me you were only nineteen that night at the ball."

"That morning! It was dawn when we met! Have you forgotten? You carried me down the great ballroom, and the boys pelted us with flowers—but you didn't care—we walked through the garden—don't you smell the lilies and roses still? It was like Paradise, I remember the scent of the Spring morning, and then outside the sunshine!"

"Yes, and the jolly old cabby who drove us home, and the warm wind beating in our faces."

"You gave the cabby a sovereign, and then laughed and remembered it was your last, and you had to walk to your diggings."

"But first we sat and talked in that little room of yours, and we listened to the sparrows chirping in your garden outside and I called you Dolores."

"And then you went away."

"Then I went away!"

"You came again, though."

"You were ill."

"Yes—and you brought me a basket of fruit and flowers, and you held my hand—and that was all!"

"And that was all."

Again the man sighed:

"Where are you now, Ruby?"

The forgotten things of youth did not reply. He laid them back in the box; he would not look at any more.

That photograph, though, stared at him: "Jack, from his pal, Joe!"

Joe was killed in a brawl in a gaming saloon out West. A fine chap, Joe; his best, in fact his only pal.

"We said we'd stick to one another through life, didn't we, Jack?"

The man nodded.

"But the beggars plugged me because I'd won their money, and there wasn't enough life left—but I'm waiting—on the other side, old chap."

"Is Ruby waiting there?" whispered the man. But Joe could not reply, he

had faded away in a mist, a mist that grew thicker and heavier every minute.

The sound of a rippling trout stream brawling away over the mountainous moorlands, and the scent of sweet tobacco, and then the vision of a girl standing knee deep in the water with a landing net.

"Dicky! Is that you? I can't see."

"Yes, it's I. What jolly days those were up among the hills. Were we lovers, or friends, I forget——"

Suddenly the vision disappeared; the man held a big bundle of letters in his hand. He opened one, and holding it close to his face began to read:

I should always like to be your friend, dear; I know you love me; I think I love you—but I'm not quite sure, and my father would be so angry, and I *know* it would be wrong to marry on less than four hundred a year——

Oh, dear, dear Jack, do forgive me if I've hurt you—I shall never forget you, dear, and always remember the happy days we spent together on the Thames, and——

He set his teeth, and spelt out the signature aloud, "Grace."

His first proposal; his first real love affair! The first; the purest; the best! Grace! The scent was of Spring violets now.

Grace!

Oh, but she was beautiful—who had won her at last? Where did she find the rest and protection he had longed, with the first great, unsatisfied longing of youth, to give her?

Grace!

* * * * *

"What! Are you off to bed?"

The pink cushions stirred, and the pretty, frail woman awoke and stretched herself, and rose and came to her husband's side.

"Still looking for that silly old paper?" she said petulantly.

"Still looking," he mumbled, bowing his head.

"Why, the letters are wet—see, there are drops of water, there—and there!"

"I spilt—my—drink," said the husband, shutting the box.

The wife yawned and walked to the door.

"Why don't you burn all those dirty old letters and things?" she cried. "Surely they're worthless?"

The man switched off the light and lifted the big tin box lovingly in his arms.

"They are priceless possessions," he whispered:

And the mixture of manuscripts, letters, ball and theatre programmes, and race-cards rustled softly and gladly in their perfumed grave in the big tin box.

STORIES IN VERSE.

Any readers who would like to recite these poems in public should apply for permission to do so to the Editor, *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Conscience Money. * * *

* * * * * By JESSIE POPE.

Betty and May had always been
The very best of chums,
Since when they shared their sweets at school
And did each other's sums.
And when their happy schoolgirl days
At length had slipped their tether,
They vowed their aim in life would be
To live alone together.

May's brother Dick opposed the plan,
And Betty's brother Harry.
If girls required a change of home,
They argued: "Why not marry?"
The parents also to their scheme
Decidedly objected,
But opposition made them keen,
As might have been expected.

And in the end they had their way—
Trust pretty girls for that—
They took a tiny house in which
One scarce could swing a cat.
Their furniture was "mock" antique—
A rickety collection,
They did the work themselves, and vowed
The "simple life" perfection:

But by-and-by the prospect grew
Less brilliantly resplendent;
They scorned to tell their woes at home—
They were too independent.
But, what with blouses, food and soap,
And now and then a treat,
The problem faced them day and night
Of how to make ends meet.

Their ignorance of books and bills
Was really quite sublime;
An invitation to the sea
Came in the nick of time:
With joy they fled from household cares
And spent a week in clover;
A week—no sooner did it start,
Alas! than it was over.

Still, both had had a lovely time,
And both were very brown,
Betty was earliest at home—
May stayed to shop in town—
Dejectedly she turned the key,
And there inside the door
She saw a long blue envelope
Upon the passage floor.

Suspiciously she broke the seal,
And with misgivings read:
"The police have got an eye upon
These premises," it said.
The colour faded from her cheek,
A piteous cry she uttered;
And, sinking helpless in a chair,
"What have we done!" she muttered.

The shock, so dreadful and complete,
Had really quite upset her;
"If I could get a cup of tea,"
She gasped, "I should feel better!"
At thought of tea her strength revived,
She felt in better fettle;
And rising, turned to light the gas
And boil the little kettle:

She found a box and struck a match,
And turned the gas all right;
She watched and waited, but, alas!
There was no gas to light.
A quick suspicion sent her heart
Down to her little boots,
"The gas bill isn't paid!" she cried;
"They've cut it off—the brutes!"

"I've got a little money left,
I'd better go and pay,
Then I can get the kettle boiled
In time to welcome May.
How can the gasmen be so mean,
So covetous and petty!"
She counted out her little store,
"It's robbery!" sighed Betty:

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The gasman was urbane and bland,
He seemed disposed to chat,
But Betty's pretty face was stern—
She had not come for that.
"Please turn it on at once!" she said,
"I want to make the tea;"
He stared at her in some surprise,
"It's on all right," said he.

He seemed so certain he was right,
So sure she was mistaken;
She hurried back again perplexed,
Her self-assurance shaken.
But still the gas refused to light
For all her patient trying,
Till, sick at heart and hungry, too,
Poor Betty burst out crying.

May in the meantime had returned,
Dust-stained and travel-worn,
She hoped for tea, but found the place
Deserted and forlorn.
But looking round with weary eyes
One thing did not escape her,
For close by on the table lay
That blue official paper.

The shock she felt on reading it
Was quite too much for May;
She pressed her hand against her brow,
About to faint away.
Then clinging to the friendly wall
And doorway to support her,
She tottered trembling to the tap
To get a drink of water.

But, lo! the water wouldn't come,
She turned the tap in vain,
And this unlooked-for contretemps
Revived her strength again.
"Alas! I understand," she cried,
"Our woes accumulate;
They've cut it off—we've never paid
That wretched water rate!"

"The police are on our track," she mused,
"Because of all we owe.
What ever would they say at home?
But never shall they know!"
She broke her bank of sixpences—
It seemed a little rough—
And emptied out her money-box
Before she'd scraped enough.

Then out into the street she sped,
While safe within her pocket
There lay the money for the rate
Wrapped in its little docket.

The man with gallantry remarked
The wind had changed its quarter,
But failed entirely to admit
A shortage in the water.

Perplexed, May hurried back to find
Poor Betty drenched with tears:
"The gas," she sobbed, "refused to light
Although she'd paid arrears."
May laughed—to Betty's ears no sound
Had ever sounded sweeter:
"Of course it won't!" she cried; "I've turned
The gas off at the meter.

"I did it when we went away,
The leakage to abate;
But, dear, they've cut the water off;
I've just now paid the rate."
Then Betty started up and cried:
"Why, darling, don't you know,
I plugged the tap before we went
To stop it dripping so."

"Then, what's that dreadful paper for?"
Cried May; and Betty shivered;
"We've never knowingly done wrong,"
She cried, with lip that quivered.
"I'm not afraid, for one!" said May:
And then, her courage mocking,
There sounded at the outer door
A loud, ferocious knocking.

"Oh, dear, whatever's that!" they gasped
In accents of alarm.
"I'll g—g—go and see," said May,
But Betty caught her arm.
"I'll stick to you, my friend," she cried,
"In fair and stormy weather;
Whenever danger threatens us
We'll risk our lives together."

The knocking came again so loud,
They felt they dared not tarry;
Together opened wide the door,
And there stood—Dick and Harry.
Their sisters stared at them amazed,
With faces white as fleece,
"Thank goodness!" they exclaimed, "it's
you!"
We thought it was the police!"

They dragged them to the sitting-room;
Each sister kissed her brother;
And Dick and Harry heard their tale
With glee they scarce could smother.
And when the girls the paper showed—
The cause of their undoing—
Their brothers smiled, for brighter grew
The prospect of their wooing.

"We wrote and asked the police to keep
An eye upon the place,"
Said Harry, "and they always send
This notice in that case.
Come, girls, admit you've had enough
Now all your money's spent ;
Give up this hole-and-corner place"—
And silence gave consent:
They lit the gas and made the tea—
A tea that lasted hours ;
The boys bought chocolates and cakes
And pastry, fruit and flowers:

And when they thrashed the matter out
The housekeepers admitted
That girls who choose to live alone
Are really to be pitied.
So Dick and Harry plucked up heart,
Emboldened by success ;
And two proposals on their part
Received replies of "Yes."
And when, at last, each took his leave,
His hostess thanked—and kissed her !
The reader may perhaps believe
That neither kissed his sister:

The Boyless Town. * * *

A cross old woman of long ago
Declared that she hated noise :
"The town would be so pleasant, you know,
If only there were no boys."
She scolded and fretted about until
Her eyes grew heavy as lead ;
And then of a sudden the town grew still,
For all the boys had fled:
And all through the long and dusty street
There wasn't a boy in view,
The football field where they used to meet
Was a sight to make one blue ;
The grass was growing on every plot,
And the paths that the runners made ;
For there wasn't a soul in all the place
Who knew how the game was played:
The dogs were sleeping the livelong day,
Why should they bark or leap ?
There wasn't a whistle or call to play,
And so they could only sleep.

The pony neighed from his lonely stall,
And longed for saddle and rein ;
And even the birds on the garden wall
Chirped only a dull refrain:
The cherries rotted and went to waste,
There was no one to climb the trees,
And nobody had a single taste
Save only the birds and bees:
There wasn't a messenger boy—not one
To speed as such messengers can ;
If people wanted their errands done,
They sent for the messenger man:
There was little, I ween, of frolic and noise,
There was less of cheer and mirth ;
The sad old town, since it lacked the boys,
Was the dreariest place on earth.
The poor old woman began to weep,
Then woke with a sudden scream ;
"Dear me !" she cried, "I have been asleep,
And—oh, what a horrid dream !"

The Clever Servant. * * *

In days of old, the story's told,
When still the coaches ran,
There lived in Edinburgh town
A worthy gentleman:
On business he was oft compelled
To journey far and wide,
But in the coach could rarely get
A comfortable ride.
For he was stout, and soon found out
(How often still 'tis true !)
That he could scarce find "room for one,"
Where there were "seats for two."
It chanced one day that on the way
To Glasgow he was bound,

So, to obtain some elbow-room,
A cunning plan he found.
"Now, John," said he, "just list to me,
Straight to the coachman go,
Two seats secure, and I'll be sure
To get some comfort so."
The servant did as he was bid,
Then back again returned.
"Now, sir," said he, "you must agree
How well your praise I've earned !"
"It chanced to-day that many folk
To Glasgow wished to ride ;
So one seat in the coach I've booked,
The other one outside !"

By A.F.A.X.

True Detective Stories. * *

* * * * * By M. F. GORON.

(Late Chief of the Paris Detective Police.)

Edited by ALBERT KEYZER. * * * * *

These thrilling stories relate true incidents in the career of M. Goron—in fact, they are actual extracts from the pages of the diary which he kept while engaged in the duties of his profession. M. Goron has taken the very keenest interest in preparing the stories for press. They now, for the first time, appear in print. Each story is complete in itself.

IX.—The Lotus Flower.

THE usually quiet Rue du Général Appert was in a great state of excitement. Carriages and cabs drove up to the house of Madame H—, and crowds of well-dressed people elbowed their way to the salons on the first floor. It was a few days before Mademoiselle Yvonne H.'s marriage, and a big display had been made of the trousseau and presents that had been accumulating during the last few weeks.

The three reception rooms were thrown open, and long, narrow tables lined the walls, covered with jewelery, fans, plate, and works of art of every description. At the principal table, where the jewelery and lace were exhibited, a glass case had been specially fitted to guard the contents against indiscreet fingers.

As a rule, detectives—who, by the uninitiated are often taken for poor relations—are engaged to guard the property, as it is difficult to know how many uninvited guests manage to squeeze their way into the house. Madame H—, however, had not taken this precaution; and this mistake on her part it was that caused me to make her acquaintance.

It was discovered that a costly pendant had mysteriously disappeared, and early the next morning I was in the Rue du Général Appert, seated opposite Madame H— (the widow of a wealthy merchant), her daughter Yvonne, and a fat, red-faced, pompous, elderly gentleman, whom the ladies addressed as Uncle Jérôme. To my surprise he was loudest in his lamentations, and I soon discovered the reason. The pendant had been presented by him, and he seemed to take it as a personal affront that the thief should have selected his gift.

I had many questions to ask, but the man blustered so that I had to cut him short and

beg the ladies to show me the glass case from which the jewel had been abstracted.

This glass case was absolutely intact, and the thief must have watched his opportunity to raise it unobserved. Only a man with a cool head and a steady hand would have dared to attempt this, in a room full of people, with half-a-dozen attendants near the tables.

Uncle Jérôme had, it seems, already started acting the amateur detective, bullying and questioning the servants, and driving them to the verge of hysterics. I came to the conclusion that they knew nothing, and that no information of any value could be obtained from the ladies or their loud-voiced relative.

Whilst I was examining the room in search of a possible clue, I heard Uncle Jérôme call out in angry tones:

"And what about the Baron's coat? Does Monsieur Goron know anything about that?"

I turned round.

"What Baron, and what coat?"

"Well, you see, Monsieur Goron," said Madame H—, "it was altogether an unfortunate day; for when Baron S— asked for his coat, it was nowhere to be found."

"Has anything else been stolen?" I inquired.

"No," said Madame H—: "I think this was quite enough for one afternoon."

"I think so, too," interrupted the uncle, "the Baron must have a fine opinion of the people you receive."

And, turning to me, he added:

"I have the pleasure of being one of the Baron's friends, and it makes it very awkward for me—very! I introduced him here."

At my request Madame made a rough

sketch of the pendant. It was of Oriental design, set with large diamonds, ending in a small lotus flower.

I also asked for the address of the Baron, whom I wanted to see about the coat, and learnt he was a Russian, very rich, living in the Avenue de l'Alma. As I rose to leave, Uncle Jérôme insisted on a minute's private conversation.

"Monsieur Goron," he began, when we were alone, "I did not like to speak before my sister-in-law, but I consider it my duty to mention a certain gentleman's name to you—Alfred O—, a relation by marriage of Madame H—, a good-for-nothing, who has been mixed up in several ugly affairs. I begged my sister-in-law repeatedly not to receive him, but he plays the 'funny man,' amuses the ladies, and makes himself at home here—too much so."

"Do you mean to imply——"

"I imply nothing, I am only giving you a hint."

The valet opened the door for me, and at that moment a closed cab drove up; a young man alighted and remained talking to a lady inside. A lace veil hid her face.

"Who is that?" I asked the valet.

"That's Monsieur Alfred," he replied, with the shadow of a sneer, "and that woman inside is his friend 'Tips.'"

"Who is Tips?"

"Not much good."

Alfred, apparently, was not a *persona grata* with the valet.

Thus far I had no clue whatever. I, therefore, resolved not to act before I had seen both the Baron and Alfred.

In my office two inspectors met me with smiling faces.

"You were right, sir," said one, "about those bicycle thieves. We arrested them this morning, and found about twenty cycles in the place you mentioned."

Nodding to his companion: "That will be good news for Tips. Hers was among the lot."

"Who the dickens is Tips? This is the second time within an hour I hear her mentioned."

"Her name, sir, is Georgette Chevalier. She was married to a trainer, a brute, who beat her, and drank himself to death. She speaks English as well as French, and is well-known to the English trainers and jockeys in Chantilly and Maisons Laffitte, who christened her 'Tips' because she always wants to know the winner. You can see her almost every night at the Café Sylvain.

She likes late suppers. A month ago her bicycle was stolen. I happened to be in the Police Commissary's Office when she came to tell him of it. I promised her to do my best, and have sent her a note that will make her happy. I reckon she will be here to-morrow to ask for her bike."

Tips had aroused my curiosity:

"When she comes I want to see her."

"All right, sir."

Before calling on Baron S—I made an inquiry about Alfred O—, and what I heard was deplorable. The fortune he had inherited from his mother was squandered in less than two years, and his father, a retired Colonel, was almost ruined by his son's extravagance. Alfred raised money when he could, and in a gambling club had been accused of attempting to cheat. This charge had never been proved, and it ended in a duel, when he ran two inches of steel in his traducer's body. He belonged to a first-class family, and was distantly related to Madame H—, whose house he visited regularly.

The Baron, I learnt, had an estate in Russia, where he stayed for the Summer. The Winter he spent in Paris, and was very popular in the world *où l'on s'amuse*. He had an apartment in the Avenue de l'Alma; and I went there towards eleven in the morning.

His servant, a tall, well-built young man, informed me in bad French, with a strong Russian accent, that his master was having his bath, and would be pleased to receive me in a few minutes. He soon made his appearance, a distinguished, aristocratic man.

I apologised for disturbing him so early, and begged him to give me an account of the disappearance of his coat.

"Between ourselves," he smiled, "I am surprised these accidents do not happen oftener. This is my second Winter in Paris, and the third time I have attended one of these functions. They are a boon to the Paris thieves. I am sorry I lost my fur coat; it was a valuable one. My idiot of a servant will tell you how it occurred—Boris!"

The valet, at the Baron's request, then explained to me, in his abominable French, that he had been waiting in the hall for his master, with the coat over his arm. Finding it cumbersome, with so many people passing in and out, he had put it in a little room leading from the hall, and when he went to fetch it, it was gone.

"But why did you not leave it in charge of one of the servants?" I asked.

"I expected my master to come down every moment, and as the door of the little room was open I could keep my eyes on the coat all the time: I may have lost sight of it for a second."

The Baron shrugged his shoulders, and I heard the word "fool."

I put a few questions; and as neither the Baron nor Boris could supply any further information I withdrew, but, my senses as usual on the alert, I detected a peculiar perfume, very faint, without being able to fix it with certainty: I could not positively say whether it emanated from the room itself or from one or other of the men: Slight as it was, it annoyed me, as my sense of smell is very acutely developed:

I had written a note to Alfred O—— asking him to call, and found him waiting for me: I need not describe that type of young man, to be met on the racecourse, at first nights, at fashionable gatherings, to whom life is nothing but a huge joke.

My visitor certainly did not look at the melancholy side of things: He roared with laughter when I broached the subject of the robbery:

"Please excuse me, Monsieur Goron, the whole thing is so ludicrous. Do you know that Uncle Jérôme, whom you saw this morning, darkly hinted that I stole the pendant? I heard it from the little German governess: I think he does it out of revenge because I made fun of it. You never saw anything so ugly: The diamonds are magnificent, but the design is absurdly grotesque, with that silly little flower dangling at the end."

"You were at Madame H——'s the day the pendant was stolen?"

"Yes, the greater part of the afternoon."

"Did you notice anything likely to throw any light on the affair?"

"Nothing whatever: It seems very strange: Uncle Jérôme is terribly upset, but, I think, more on account of the coat. The old chap is proud of his acquaintance with a baron!"

The next day I was busy investigating a case that had happened during the night, when I was informed that Georgette Chevalier, *alias* Tips, was downstairs, and had come about her bicycle:

"Show her in at once," I said:

Georgette certainly was pretty: Small, remarkably graceful, with large, brown, intelligent eyes.

"You wanted to see me?" she remarked in a gentle voice.

"Madame Georgette——" I began:

"Please call me Tips, everybody else does."

"Very well, Tips, since you prefer it: I had the pleasure of seeing you a couple of days ago."

"Me? Where?"

"In a cab; you were talking to your friend."

"What friend?"

"Alfred O——."

"He is not my friend, Monsieur Goron: Not in the sense you mean; and I do not understand you."

"Never mind, Tips. By the way, are you glad your bicycle is found?"

"Rather: But the stupid people at the Police Commissariat are fussing to make me prove I am the rightful owner of the machine: I can give you the receipt of the maker; I have brought it here with me."

She put her hand inside her muff, and, with her purse, drew out a small silk pocket-handkerchief which she laid on my writing-table: I took it up, for I immediately detected the same faint perfume that had struck me at the Baron's chambers.

"What scent is that on the handkerchief, Tips?" I asked:

"There is no scent on it," she replied crossly. "I never use any!"

"Great Scott, girl, do you mean to tell me you smell nothing?" And I held the handkerchief to her nose:

"No, nothing."

"In that case, Tips, all I say is that this handkerchief cannot be your property: How do you come by it?"

She bit her lip, and, after a silence, began:

"I really do not understand why you are so interested in my handkerchiefs. I call it indiscreet: And now, allow me to wish you good-morning."

"Please sit down again, Tips, and excuse my being what you call indiscreet. But I must and will know more about this handkerchief. Once more I ask you how you came by it!"

"I picked it up."

"When?"

"Last night."

"Where?"

"At the Café Sylvain."

"Do you know who lost it?"

"Yes, a man."

"What man?"

"I don't know him."

"Tips, speak the truth."

"I am speaking the truth. I swear it. I had dined at Sylvain's last night, and was drinking my coffee when a gentleman, at the table next to me, asked the waiter for his bill. I fancy he must have taken a little too much champagne, for he dropped, first his pocket-book, then his keys, and finally several gold pieces. After he had left I saw this handkerchief on the floor, and when I picked it up a small, glittering thing fell out of it. I saw it was of little value, and put it in my pocket for luck."

"Show it me, Tips," I said.

She took it out of her purse and threw it on the table. It was a tiny lotus flower in green enamel and gold.

I gazed at it a long time, and could hardly repress a smile, when, looking up, I noticed the expression in Tips' eyes.

"Why do you laugh, Monsieur Goron?" she asked. "And, do you mind explaining what it all means?"

"I am laughing for several reasons, Tips; but especially because you eye me suspiciously. It is the world reversed."

She was holding the handkerchief to her nose, and sniffed hard.

"It may be my imagination," she said, "but I fancy I trace a slight smell of violets. Is that the scent you meant?"

"No, Tips. Perfumes, like flowers, have a language of their own, a language which I am afraid you would not understand. I shall keep the handkerchief and the enameled flower, for I have a notion that I shall come across the person who is now anxiously looking for both. Will you come back this afternoon?"

"Certainly!" And she tripped out of the room.

I had made no disclosures to her, and let her go, fully convinced of the truth of her story. I was beginning to see daylight, and the matter was certainly growing in interest.

My first visit was to Madame H—, whom fortunately I found at home. She recognised the lotus flower as forming part of the stolen pendant, and pressed me with questions, which I refused to answer just then.

I went next to the Café Sylvain. Tips' statement was confirmed by the waiter. A dark, close-shaven man had dined there the night before, and had dropped several things. After he had gone, the waiter had found a pair of gloves, which he brought me.

They, too, exhaled the same faint, curious smell; and, thrusting them into my pocket, I promptly drove round to the Avenue de l'Alma.

The Baron—the *concierge* informed me—was out of town. I mounted the stairs to his apartment on the second floor, and was just going to press the bell when I quickly withdrew my hand, and stood motionless. I heard a noise. Somebody near the door was moving a box or a heavy piece of furniture. It was Boris, the valet. I heard him bump against something, utter an exclamation of pain, and relieve his feelings in the vilest language imaginable.

I softly stole downstairs and in less than three-quarters of an hour returned with two of my men.

Boris opened the door. His master, he said, had gone to Nice.

"That does not matter," I remarked, "my visit is for you. I have come to bring you the news that I have discovered the man who stole your master's coat. I can even give you the address of the house where you will find it."

The man eyed me and my companions with astonishment, and remarked that his master would be glad to hear it.

"That remains to be seen," I continued. "For the moment I have to deal with you, and I must say that I am surprised your master should have selected you to assist him in his work. I never saw a man bungle things like you do."

"Your master and you go out on an expedition of a peculiar nature to Madame H—'s house. Your master—apparently a great expert—performs a marvelous trick of sleight-of-hand in making a jewel disappear from a glass case, and then diverts suspicion by posing as a victim. That story of the stolen coat was cleverly invented, but after the way you told it, it dawned upon me that you might be the supposed thief, and that the coat is here now."

"Your next mistake was also very bad. Your master, having extracted the diamonds from the pendant, left you the gold setting—no doubt by way of perquisite—and you put the little lotus flower in your pocket. In the evening you wanted to play the 'swell.' You dined in a fashionable restaurant, but you got so drunk that you dropped your money, your handkerchief, and also the gold flower."

"Worse still, your handkerchief and gloves tell—I should rather say, smell—their own tale. People in your profession

should not use scent. Unfortunately for your master, his olfactory nerves are less developed than his other senses, otherwise he would not have allowed you to use it: I noticed that smell when I called after the robbery:

"Now comes your crowning performance: Your Russian accent was as good a thing as ever I heard: I even own that at first it deceived me. But you should have remembered that when a man once adopts a foreign accent he must stick to it—even when he is alone. An hour ago when you knocked your shins you started swearing in the purest Parisian slang, and you gave the show away:

"And the result of these mistakes is that it is now my duty to arrest you."

The changes in the man's face, while I spoke, were extraordinary: Surprise, disappointment, fear, despair, shame, alternately were depicted there, until finally his features assumed an expression of resignation, which they retained:

At my request he showed me the stolen coat. It was hanging in one of the cupboards.

The man seemed numbed. When we arrived at the Police Prefecture I gave orders to let him, what we call in police parlance, "simmer" in a room by himself to collect his thoughts:

An hour later I sent for him: The clock struck four. I remembered Tips. She had arrived.

"Do you know that gentleman?" I asked her, pointing to Boris.

"Why, yes, he's the man who sat at the table next to me at Sylvain's, and——"

"That will do, Tips."

I took her to one of the rooms adjoining my office, and said:

"You have unconsciously placed yourself in danger, and unconsciously have rendered me a service, for which I thank you: Let me now give you a word of advice. Don't frequent cafés, and if ever again you find something in a public place, don't put it in your pocket: It might prove fatal."

Tips' eyes opened wide.

"No, Tips, I have no time for explanation. Good-bye."

And I returned to my prisoner:

Boris was pacing up and down the room, and, in a hoarse voice, said:

"It is all up with me. I know you are waiting for me to speak, and I will speak: The smash was bound to come. The man I am serving bought his title in Italy. I

met him three years ago in Moscow, in a club where I was one of the attendants in the baccarat-room: These clubs are haunts of vice: One night I gave way to temptation: I was conducting a half-tipsy gentleman to his carriage. His portfolio, full of bank-notes, was hanging out of his pocket and I took it. I thought nobody was near, but Baron S—— had watched me: He told me to come to his rooms that night, and forced me to write a confession of my crime, promising not to denounce me so long as I served him faithfully: The next day I discovered that he was a dangerous adventurer; and he has come to Paris for a big coup, supposed to bring him in a lot of money."

"Why, then, did he steal that pendant, a most difficult undertaking, where he ran a terrible risk?"

"I have asked myself that question several times. I am inclined to think he was short of money. On the other hand, he is a strange man. Danger attracts him, and I would not be surprised if the very difficulty of the thing tempted him."

Heaving a sigh, he added:

"I don't care what becomes of me, Monsieur Goron, so long as I get out of that man's clutches."

He signed his deposition, and was then taken to the Depot (the Central Police Station).

The Baron had gone to Nice, and Boris gave me his address.

I felt certain the Baron was not only a dangerous but an experienced and clever scoundrel; possibly, too, the head of an organisation of criminals, and I preferred to have him arrested under my personal supervision.

I had telegraphed to Nice to keep an eye upon the gentleman until my arrival. I waited until he returned from the club to his hotel, and then informed him that he would have to come with me to Paris, to answer the charges of having stolen a jewel at Madame H——'s house.

He eyed me for a moment with a slight lift of the eyebrows.

"I must warn you, Monsieur Goron," he said, "that you are risking your position by arresting me on such an absolutely preposterous charge."

"I take the risk."

He did not utter a syllable when we overhauled his luggage, nor when we searched his pockets. And all the way to the capital he never spoke a word:

At the Police Prefecture he made a formal protest against his arrest, and then drove with me and an official to his apartment, which, since Boris was in custody, had been kept under observation. Except the famous fur coat I found nothing of interest beyond a quantity of correspondence and a heap of documents—chiefly in Russian—which I sealed in his presence and took back to the Prefecture.

On the following morning the Baron was to be confronted with Boris.

I had informed Madame H—— that Baron S—— had been arrested; and a couple of hours later she and Uncle Jérôme came to my office in a great state of alarm to tell me that they did not want to charge the Baron.

I looked at them in amazement:

"Yes," they said, speaking in an excited tone, "this case must never come for trial. We dare not face the scandal."

"What scandal?" I shouted.

"The scandal in the Press. Why, we should become the laughing stock of all Paris!"

"You surely cannot expect me," I replied sternly, "to enter into such considerations: I think myself lucky in having caught that fellow, and he certainly shall not escape: Moreover, you do not seem to be aware that even your withdrawing the charge would not further matters so far as you are concerned, for the case is already in the Public Prosecutor's hands."

They whispered together, and left. And then I had another visitor, that of a well-known Senator, a man in a high position, and a friend of Madame H——. He earnestly begged me to use my influence with the authorities in Madame H——'s behalf.

All this Society snobbishness began to grate on my nerves. I refused to listen to him, and referred him to the Public Prosecutor.

But it was written that this affair should be fraught with surprises.

I was asked to call at once on the examining magistrate on an urgent matter, and,

with a grim smile, he handed a document to me.

It was a demand from the Russian Government for the extradition of a so-called Baron S—— on a charge of forging bonds, swindling, and bribing State officials:

It meant transportation for life if the man were taken.

The Baron's nerves nearly gave way when this news was communicated to him. But he made a violent effort, and turning to me said:

"I have a request to make to you, Monsieur Goron. Do what you can for that poor wretch Boris. He has nothing to do with this Russian business. I trust you understand me?"

"I understand."

It spoke well for the man that in this hour of trouble he thought of his humble companion whose ruin he had worked:

Things underwent altogether a queer change. It was decided not to proceed against the Baron in connection with the jewel robbery, as it was doubtful that, owing to Madame H——'s attitude, a conviction could be obtained:

After the usual formalities the Baron was handed over to the Russian officials, and twenty years' transportation fell to his share.

Boris was released from custody after a severe admonition, which may or may not have had its effect. I never again came across him.

One day a lady asked to see me. On her card I read: Madame Alfred O——. She entered, and I recognised Tips, looking as pretty as ever:

"I knew you would be glad to see me," she began:

"Very glad, Tips."

"You see, we were married six months ago: Alfred inherited a little money, and is quite a reformed character: He has become a bookmaker, and has a fine connection: I help him in the business."

"Naming winners, I suppose?"

"Of course! Isn't my name 'Tips'?"

(Next month will be published another of these powerful stories: "The Soiled Collar.")



The Temptation of *Henry Cunningham.*

By HERBERT JAMIESON.

*In which a tug-of-war between right and wrong ends in an
amazing manner.*

“WHAT do you wish me to do, father?”
“To marry Philip Lever.”

“But if I don’t love him?”

“You will—in time. He’s a bit hot-tempered, I’ll admit, but a right-down honest, straight man, and he’ll make you as good a husband as can be found round here. And, then, Jessie, remember that you’ve not only yourself to consider.”

Jessie Durham’s colour heightened. She and her father were driving home through the dry, exhilarating Canadian air, and her cheeks were already aglow, but Mr. Durham could not help noticing the deeper hue that crept into them as he spoke those last words. The girl kept silent, and, cracking the whip, Mr. Durham turned to her somewhat gruffly.

“Is it Henry Cunningham you’re thinking of? Yes, I know you are. Well, I like him, too, and if there were no other consideration, I should say—have him. But Cunningham’s poor—poor as a church-mouse—and Lever has already made his pile. It’s money we want, and it’s money I must have, if the farm is to be kept up. Marry Lever, and he’ll join his capital with mine—he has already promised as much—and together we shall pull the concern through. Without his help, goodness knows what will become of us.”

Jessie looked at her father’s heavily-lined face, which had grown strangely older during the last year—then sadly across the frost-held, snow-covered ground they were traversing. Last year the grain crop had been poor, and it had been followed by a disastrous fruit season, the mischievous blight that had befallen more or less the whole district seeming to affect their trees

to a greater degree than those of their neighbours.

Two years ago—the first year after her mother’s death—how prosperous they had been, how rosy had appeared the outlook; and now circumstances were entirely changed with them. Keeping her father’s accounts as she did, Jessie knew exactly how matters stood. The credit balance with which they commenced the financial year had almost disappeared.

“You’re quiet, Jessie. You’re not angry?”

“No, I’m thinking, father.”

“I spoke a bit roughly. I’m sorry; I shouldn’t have done. But all this bad luck of late has shortened my temper. What are you thinking of?”

“If—I dare marry Philip.”

She relapsed into silence again, and he let her pursue the current of her thought, contenting himself with speaking an encouraging word to the now tired horse.

Had he seen her eyes, he would have observed that they were full of tears—tears which she fortunately forced back, though the effort started a horrible lump in her throat. How cruel and hard life was! Out in these parts men seemed to think of nothing but material ends, and her father, good man as he was in many ways, had not escaped the prevailing disposition. Matters of the heart and soul only weighed with him now in very trifling measure. And yet it was difficult to allow—so much did she care for him—that he was in the wrong:

“Cold, lass?”

“Not very!”

“We shall be home in a minute or two.”

Their little house came into view. The

setting sun threw it into relief, brought out its imperfections. The chimneys wanted renewing, some of the slates were loose, the woodwork in many places was rotting for lack of paint—yet without money—

He held up his arms to help her out. She paused:

"Father, I've quite decided. You may ask Philip round to-morrow evening—no, not to-morrow evening—the evening after."

To-morrow evening she would see Henry Cunningham and give him her heart's farewell.

* * * * *

In a room that was dark save for the glow from the fire sat Henry Cunningham; plunged in thought:

All day he had been hard at work—blessed work that served to take him out of himself—but now had come the inevitable time for reflection. He had drawn his chair close to the fire, and, with his elbows resting on his knees, gazed into the embers. The expression on his face was sad, and his thoughts were very bitter.

It was difficult to believe that it was only last night that Jessie Durham had bidden him farewell. He had gone in response to her note, expecting he knew not what, and had heard from her lips the melancholy message that was to entirely change all his days.

She had behaved with perfect frankness, telling him everything. Her marriage with Philip Lever was confessedly a marriage of convenience, but in her father's sad, sorry position what could she do? She had directly invited his condemnation, but no, he could not give that. Perhaps, according to some lights, she was doing right. He was only grieved, inexpressibly grieved.

Cunningham shifted his position back a little. The heat of the fire (it was really rather a mild night) was proving rather stupefying, and he wanted to think, painful as the process was:

Lack of money—what a curse it was! He knew where Jessie's heart lay. Although she had not admitted it directly, she had kissed his forehead at parting—and the kiss had penetrated to his inner being.

Why had Philip Lever been lucky, Henry Cunningham unlucky? Why was Jessie to be sacrificed on the altar of Lever's success? Baffling questions! Life was a strangely puzzling thing.

Well, nothing was to be gained by sitting and brooding. It was early yet—only six o'clock—and he could not spend the whole evening like this. He would get a book and try to read. With a sigh he lighted the lamp and, selecting a book, sat down at the table:

He was struggling with the first few sentences when he heard the postman's well-known step coming up the path. By the time the latter was at the door, Cunningham had it open:

"Hullo, Ted! A heavy mail to-night?"

"Only one, Mr. Cunningham, but that's one more than usual, isn't it?" He handed it across—the last letter he had to deliver that evening: "Milder weather now?"

"Much! I fancy the frost will soon be gone, and no sooner than most of us want it to go. It's been a terribly long and severe Winter, and we Englishmen feel it more than you Canadians do. Won't you come in for a minute?"

Nothing loth, the postman stepped inside. His work was done for the day, and he was dearly fond of a bit of harmless gossip. Recognising the handwriting on the letter as that of his sister in London, Cunningham had slipped it, unopened, into his pocket, for subsequent leisurely perusal. Thus we deal with our faithful, regular correspondents who never miss a mail.

"Well, Ted, what's the news?"

"Nothing; only it seems that that chap Lever and young Jessie Durham are engaged."

Cunningham hid his emotion:

"Oh, when did you hear that?"

"To-night at the Club. I was waiting in the hall till it was time to clear the letter-box there, when I heard Lever and several other men laughing and talking in the smoking-room, the door of which was open. He was asking if they would be surprised to hear of his being married before many months were out, and someone at once mentioned Miss Durham's name. 'No,' cried another man, whose voice I didn't recognise, 'that won't be, for I saw her last evening with Henry Cunningham, and they were thick as two peas.' And that threw Lever into a frightful passion: He cursed and swore, and called you every name under the sun. I really think that you should be careful of him, Mr. Cunningham."

"Why?"

"Well, I heard him vow that he'd come

here this very evening and have it out with you. 'I'll let Cunningham know that he's got to keep off the grass now,' those were his exact words. There's no saying what he might do in his rage. I intended to warn you."

"Thanks, Ted, you're a good friend. I'm not frightened of him, but it's just as well to be forewarned. I think it's very possible that he will come. Must you be going? Stay, and I'll make you a cup of tea first."

"No, thanks very much! The missus don't like it when I'm not home at the usual time. And I shall have to go the long way round by the road, for I daren't cross the lake again."

"What, is the ice giving?"

"Yes; it regularly cracked under my feet in one place as I came across. Mark my word, it won't bear to-morrow, and, maybe, if Lever attempts to cross it this evening, he will get more than he bargained for."

"Well, it may have the pleasant effect of cooling his temper, perhaps. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Cunningham shut the door and returned to the sitting-room. He wondered whether Lever would come or think better of it. Ah, there was his sister's letter still to read.

He opened it casually, but started a little when he noticed its brevity. His sister Hilda was a voluminous correspondent, and usually filled sheet after sheet. The letter ran:—

MY DEAREST HENRY,—I have only a few minutes to catch the mail, as I have been detained several hours at the lawyer's. Uncle Martin died suddenly last Saturday; his death upset me very much, though, of course, I have seen but little of him. But what do you think? He has left all his money equally divided between you and me. Isn't it almost incredible? You will be able to come home to the old country now. Will write you full particulars by next mail.—Your loving sister,

HILDA.

He read it through a second time, stupefied by the startling intelligence. It had always been understood that Uncle Martin, who had the bump of benevolence unduly developed, would leave his money to charitable institutions, and, as a matter of fact, Henry knew that such a will had been made. What had induced him to alter his mind and make a second will in favour of his only surviving relatives?

Cunningham did not stop to conjecture; whatever the reason, it did not matter one

whit now. He let his head fall on his arm on the table, and groaned aloud. Hilda's letter had come twenty-four hours too late. Just twenty-four hours too late!

He remembered with a pang that under ordinary circumstances the mail should have arrived last night; the steamer had been delayed a day by exceptionally foggy weather. Strange irony of circumstances! If he had been possessed of this letter last evening—before his talk with Jessie Durham—the girl might have been his for life. And now her troth was plighted to Philip Lever, and in honour he could not ask her to break it.

Slowly he folded up the letter. On one thing he was resolved. He would leave Canada—the scene of his great disappointment—and go back to England. He would certainly have the means to live comfortably there, for Uncle Martin must have died well off. And with Hilda keeping house for him, in new surroundings and amongst fresh faces, he would endeavour to commence his life anew.

What was that? Patter, patter, patter on the leads! The rain had come at last; Winter was breaking up. He would go out and see that his animals were all safely housed.

It was very dark outside. Hugging his mackintosh about him, for the rain was now falling quickly, he hurried to the outhouse where his live stock were kept, and was in the act of stretching a tarpaulin over a portion of roof that leaked, when he thought he heard the sound of feet crossing the frozen lake.

He stopped and listened. Yes, someone was coming in his direction at a quick pace across the ice. Philip Lever had kept to his intention of having it out with him that night.

Cunningham gave a final tug to the tarpaulin, secured it at the ends, and had started back to the house, when suddenly there was an ominous crack, and the sound that had been coming nearer and nearer ceased. A moment later there was a splash, followed by a smothered cry for help. The ice had given way.

Cunningham stood rooted to the spot. For almost half-a-minute he did not stir, whilst thought after thought raced through his brain.

How easy to let Philip Lever drown! If he had only been in the house at the time, he would have heard nothing, and those icy waters would have covered their victim

without anyone hearing. If he let him perish now, no one would be a penny the wiser; the obstacle to his happiness would be removed, and Jessie Durham might be his for life.

Again a cry—but fainter—came upon the wind. Then the man in Cunningham reasserted itself. No, he could not let even his greatest enemy drown without raising a hand; he felt bitterly ashamed of himself for ever having thought of such a thing.

He rushed into a shed, seized a piece of rope, and, coiling it as he ran, hurried to the water's edge. Carefully but swiftly he tried the ice there, then, finding that it was safe and secure, advanced cautiously. He had not gone twenty yards before, peering through the gloom, he could distinguish a dark form, vainly trying to regain the surface of the crumbling ice. Heaven be thanked, the man had not gone under!

Now the ice cracked ominously beneath Cunningham's own feet, but he was only about a dozen yards away. He dropped on his knees and flung the rope. It fell short the first time and had to be flung again: Then Cunningham felt a slender pull.

"Grip as hard as you can, and I'll haul you in," he cried.

Slowly—all too slowly for the rescuer, who dared not pull more strongly, the rope was dragged home. Would Lever's

feeble grip hold? One thought struck home to Cunningham—after this night he and this man could never be enemies. Ah, the hold was slackening!

"Only a bit further!" Cunningham cried.

Suddenly the grip relaxed altogether; but Cunningham, leaning over the edge of the safe ice, had stretched forward and grasped the now senseless form as, with hands raised aloft, it had commenced to sink. A cry of thankfulness burst from Cunningham's lips—then an exclamation of surprise, as he looked at the form he had rescued.

It was not Philip Lever at all. He had saved the life of the woman he loved.

* * * * *

She came to herself in Cunningham's arms, as she lay before the fire he had kindled into a blaze.

"Thank God, you heard my cry, Henry!"

"Yes, I thank God!" and his head sank between his knees.

"I was coming to tell you that I could not marry Philip. I've been thinking about it all day. I was to see him at eight to-night; but, as the hour grew nearer, I knew I couldn't. I love you, Henry. I am ready to marry you, even if we have to beg our way."

He placed in her hands the letter he had just received from his sister:

* * * TIME AND THE WOMAN. * *

BY ISABEL BUTCHART.

*Time paused and leant upon his scythe :
'How strange these mortals be!'*

*"I met a woman on the earth,
Who faced me fearlessly.
'Give up thy youth!' thus whispered I,
And she gave it up to me.
Without a cry
She gave it up to me,
And only said,
As she tossed her head :
'Take it! 'Tis yours,' said she:*

*"And now give up thy love,' said I,
And she gave it up to me,
With one long sigh,
She gave it up to me,
And only said,*

*As she hung her head :
''Twas too sweet to last,' said she.*

*"I said :
'There is a shadow in thine eyes,
A haunting memory.
I will wrest the power
From that bygone hour,
For I can gracious be.
Thus peace shall be with thee.'
She turned as white
As a Winter's night,
'Ah, leave me that!' said she ;
''Twas a sorrow shared
With one who—cared—
Ah, leave me that!' said she."*

*Time paused and leant upon his scythe :
'How strange these mortals be!'*

The Caretakers.

By HELEN PROTHERO-LEWIS.

(Mrs. James J. G. Pugh).

This amusing story, which is founded on fact, relates the wiles of a caretaker to keep the house of which she was in charge from being let. So serious a question is the trickery of these persons becoming, that estate-agents, to protect their clients, are now agitating for the registration of caretakers

"YOU'RE a-wantin' in sense, representin' the house as you do.

You've got a comfortable home in it, twelve shillin's a week, coal, gas, and garding produce comin' on now nicely, and yet you go a-praisin' of the place as if you was quite in a hurry to find yerself and me 'mongst the unemployed agen."

"Which you generally is," said Mrs. Hominy sulkily.

"Oh, yes—go it, don't spare the pore husband. You wimmen know how to use yer tongues. I'll have another cup of tea, anyways."

Mrs. Hominy poured him out a cup of tea, and watched him enjoying his rasher of bacon and fried toast with an expression in which resentment fought with affection for predominance.

"I only does as is expected of me," she said presently; "and as for praisin' of the house, the board does that afore the gentle-folks comes in to view. I can't go agenst it and say as it isn't a desirable residence, when the board says 'This desirable residence,' and the house just behind it as plain as a pikestaff."

"Bless you, no one judges by them boards. The public knows they're lies, every one of them. Lies put up by the house agents, which we all smiles at and passes by with our tongues in our cheeks. Wot you've got to do is to circumvent the lies and represent the house as not fit to live in. That's the only way for you and me to stop on in it."

"Which you've got no business to be with me in Laurel Lodge at all," said Mrs. Hominy, still sulkily.

"Come, come," Mr. Hominy said. "Ain't I a desirable husband? It don't take a notice board to tell you that, surely: You're a very lucky woman, Mrs. Hominy: You've been given a comfortable job in consideration of your bein' a widder, and

all the rispeck and quiet accorded to such, and a desirable husband as well, a-stayin' with you in secret and making your life pleasant and lively for you. And all I ask of you is to tell a few small lies to keep up this easy state."

"And be found out and be sent off in disgrace with a husband as will leave me, directly he finds there's no more to be got out of me," objected Mrs. Hominy; but her husband knew by her tone that she was yielding.

Mrs. Hominy had been in Mortlake two years, and had gradually become known as a poor but respectable widow who tried to make a living by going out "charing." The living was perilously near starvation, and a berth was found for her as caretaker in the house she was now inhabiting, the owner making it a condition that the caretaker had no male belongings.

No sooner was the widow installed in her post than Mr. Hominy appeared.

When asked by his wife to explain his long desertion he told her that he had been by turns in hospital, in gaol, and in the workhouse; with intervals during which he had tramped the country seeking employment, always miserable without Mrs. Hominy, and always quite unable to send for her.

Mrs. Hominy had to accept both his explanation of his long desertion of her, and the awkwardness of his unlooked-for reappearance. He certainly made things more lively, and was prompt in disappearing when people arrived with permits to view the house. All Mrs. Hominy had to do—so he frequently impressed upon her—was to keep him in bed, board, and baccy, say nothing about him to neighbours, and go on respectably with her widowing.

"I've been thinkin'," said Mr. Hominy one evening, drawing a chair up to the hearth and lighting his pipe. "There's three things as people is terrible pertickler

over in a house : rats, drains, and damp. We'll have 'em all three goin' 'genst the next party comes to view."

"There's no rats in this house," said Mrs. Hominy firmly.

"None so blind as those who will not see, my dear."

"And the drains is puffect."

"Ugh, I can detect 'em now. You'll oblige me by doin' the same, Mrs. Hominy. Don't be a fool! Look at the comfort of this." He rolled his eyes round the well-furnished, cosy kitchen.

The cosiness appealed equally to Mrs. Hominy, after the pinching and poverty of the last two years.

"But there reelly is no damp anywheres," she protested, with a last feeble effort to remain in the path of rectitude.

"You've got rheumatism bad in your arm from that and nothin' else," said Mr. Hominy, so decidedly it would have been futile to question the truth of the statement, and almost his wife was persuaded she felt a twinge.

"You need not worrit," he proceeded. "I'll arrange there shall be rats and everythin' necessary to prove you ain't a-lyin'. In fact, I have arranged it."

"Arranged rats!" cried Mrs. Hominy, in accents of horror.

Mr. Hominy nodded.

The next morning a fresh party arrived to view the house. Mr. Hominy had been drilling his wife carefully in her new rôle as house-depreciator.

"Now, mind," he said. "Nothin' that can be laid hold on by the agents, just cunnin' hints, insinuatins' the thing. If you just put the right ideas into their heads you can leave the rest to Providence. There's the front door bell. Don't be in a hurry to answer it; makes a good beginnin', d'ye see? Makes 'em displeased with the front door step. It's rainin' cats and dogs. Now, remember: make pertickler mention of the beautiful parkay floor near the window in the dining room, and make pertickler objections to taking them into the pantry. Bear in mind I shall be listenin' behind the doors to hear how you're comportin' of yerself, so do your best, my dear."

Mrs. Hominy slowly departed to answer the bell.

Mr. and Mrs. Grant, an elderly couple, handed in their order to view, with somewhat displeased expressions. It had not been pleasant waiting on the doorstep whilst it rained cats and dogs.

"It is a pretty little hall," was Mrs. Grant's first remark. "I like the hall. Where is the drawing-room? I hope there is a nice bright drawing-room."

Mrs. Hominy led the way to the drawing-room and flung the door open. It was a fair-sized, well-shaped room, but papered with a rather deep-toned paper. On this occasion, with stretches of leaden sky and driving rain visible through the windows, it appeared somewhat gloomy. But the windows faced west, and the room got the full benefit of the afternoon sun, as Mrs. Hominy knew.

"Rather dreary," remarked Mrs. Grant, looking round with a dissatisfied expression. "What is it like on a fine day? Does it get any sun?"

There was a slight suggestive creak at the door.

"No, madam," answered Mrs. Hominy nervously. "I'm sorry to have to say the room gets no sun by any chance, madam."

"Which way does it face?" asked Mr. Grant.

"North," answered Mrs. Hominy, blurted out the words in her dislike to the lie.

Mr. Grant puckered up his face into wrinkles suggestive of thought.

"Now, I should have said it faced west," he said. "It shows how one can lose one's bearings in a town. Hallo—damp—Alice, do you perceive? I don't like to see that."

He pointed with his stick to a corner where were unmistakable signs of damp. Damp which to Mrs. Hominy's knowledge had not been there the day before.

"Please tell me the truth, do you find the house damp?" he continued, turning sharply on the caretaker.

Again a slight creak at the door.

"Yes, sir, given me the rheumatism shocking, and never had a twinge before I came here," she replied.

She looked a poor, miserable little thing, just the sort of person to be racked with rheumatism, and they implicitly believed her. Mrs. Grant shook her head as she surveyed the room.

"We may as well see the dining-room," she said, in a tone which showed the drawing-room had impressed her so unfavourably that she did not hope for great things elsewhere.

The dining-room was a really charming room; not even the gloomy outlook could detract from its delightfulness.

"The parkay flooring is supposed to be very beautiful in this room," announced

Mrs. Hominy, in a voice that would have been suitable to an undertaker. "You can see it in a better light near the window."

They moved up to the window, and then suddenly Mrs. Hominy gave a scream, for there lay a large rat outstretched and dead upon the floor. The caretaker's terror was unmistakably genuine.

"A rat," exclaimed Mrs. Grant. "Oh, if there are rats here I could never live in the house, Eric. Look at the odious, detestable thing lying there."

Gathering her skirts closely around her, Mrs. Grant hurried from the room. Rats, whether dead or living, were intolerable; no woman could be expected to settle down comfortably in a house which harboured them.

"I don't think we need look at any more rooms," said Mrs. Grant. "I have seen enough, Eric; let us go."

But Mr. Grant had come a long way to see the house and was determined to see it now he had come. So they solemnly made a tour of the rooms:

Remembering instructions, Mrs. Hominy, when they descended to the kitchens, made some clumsy objections to showing visitors into the pantry. Her manner was so uneasy that Mr. Grant became suspicious and insisted on going in. He came out almost immediately, rucking up his nose until it was a mass of fine wrinkles.

"Why, the drains must be wrong!" he cried angrily. "Don't go into that pantry, Alice, it's enough to knock a man down: What on earth could Messrs. Rawlinson have been thinking about to recommend us the place? We don't want to be laid up with typhoid. I shall go to another agent. This sort of thing won't do. Come along, my dear, don't let us waste further time here."

Disgusted and indignant, the couple departed and left Laurel Lodge to the caretaker.

"Safe in our happy home," sang Mr. Hominy, reappearing as soon as the visitors had gone. "Wonderful what a man of parts I am: a squirt, a dead rat, and some tainted fish, and here we continue, as snug as two turtle-doves. First time the use of plain cold water has ever pleased me. Let the animal world stay where it is just for the present, my dear; let the drains get worse and worse, and the rat more and more unpleasant. The fish is behind the tea tray in the pantry, close to the ground. It's come to Laurel Lodge to stop, and so have we."

In vain did Mrs. Hominy remonstrate and urge the certainty of eventual detection and dismissal. Her lord and master had the recklessness engendered by a life of vicissitude. He was used to moving on: After a long spell of Mrs. Hominy he preferred it. She was, in his opinion, so very wanting in joviality, and so hampered by absurd prejudices and foolish hankerings after the paths of virtue.

To induce her to take broader views took time and patience; but there was nothing to call Mr. Hominy elsewhere just at present, so he persevered in his training, in this instance with unusual success.

Emboldened by the success he extended his ideas, and the disadvantages of the house became so numerous and so conspicuously apparent that it was a marvel "parties to view" stayed in it five minutes, and none at all that they shook the dust of Laurel Lodge angrily from their feet on departing.

As time went on Mrs. Hominy became quite a promising pupil. She lost all her squeamishness and made the grossest misrepresentations without turning a hair.

Her temporary post seemed likely to become a permanent one, for no one who had once viewed the house ever came again, or attempted to enter into negotiations for it with the agent. He poor man, was both ill and overworked. Mrs. Hominy had been brought before his notice as a trustworthy and nice woman, and he suspected no guile.

The owner of the house, Miss Fairfax, was at the other end of England, had never even seen her caretaker, and left all details to the agent. So the base schemers basked in comfort, and Laurel Lodge, a really charming and desirable residence, found no favour in the sight of any man.

Mr. and Mrs. Hominy were beginning to feel the house quite their undisputed property, when one day there again came a ring at the front door bell. They were sitting comfortably over a dinner of steak and onions, and the sharp ring, after the long spell of non-interruption, struck Mr. Hominy as most uncalled for, almost a personal insult.

"Don't answer it," he said authoritatively; "puffet waste of time showing any more sillies round the house and out again."

"I must answer the bell," said Mrs. Hominy firmly; "it's more than my place is worth to go so far as that."

"Well, drop your widowing, then; I'm tired of being a corpse, and I ain't goin' to hide on the backstairs whilst this beautiful

steak grows cold. Let 'em find me here and blow the consequences."

A brilliant idea struck Mrs. Hominy, who was also enjoying the steak.

"I'll say the house is let, was took by a speshul friend of Miss Fairfax yesterday unbeknown to the agent. They won't go back to him then."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Hominy.

A good-looking, well-dressed woman stood on the doorstep. "Miss May," with an order to view the house.

"You've come too late, miss," said the caretaker. "The house was took yesterday."

The lady for a moment looked quite disconcerted.

"I was given to understand otherwise," she said.

"A pertickler friend of Miss Fairfax has took it; very likely the agent didn't know."

"I have come some distance to see the house," said Miss May; "and now I am here, if you please I will go over it."

She spoke with decision. Mrs. Hominy felt that to refuse might be impolitic, and admitted her, looking very sulky.

"How long has the house been untenanted?" asked the visitor.

"It's been years since anyone came to stop in the house any time," answered the caretaker, with the glibness of one who has learnt her part thoroughly. "The place is so damp it's quite dang'rous. That's why the owner of it has given up living here herself and wants to put strangers in. It's playing sad havick with my pore bones," she added, as she led the way to the drawing-room holding her arm very stiffly, a detail suggested by Mr. Hominy.

The damp in the drawing-room had grown and spread. The paper in one place was hanging in shreds.

"You can see the state the place is in for yourself," said Mrs. Hominy, nursing her arm as if in pain.

"But I do not understand why there should be damp here," said Miss May. "It is an inner wall, and evidently the moisture does not rise from the ground, for the wall near the floor is perfectly dry."

"There's no accountin' for damp," said Mrs. Hominy, speaking with the indifference she felt. "When a place is damp, it's damp, and you can't make it dry by accountin' for it. One reason may be, there's no sun ever comes into this room."

"No sun!" exclaimed Miss May.

"No, looks due north. Always dark and gloomy, miss; morning, noon, and night."

They went next to the dining-room. So intolerable was the atmosphere of this room Miss May did not remain in it for more than a moment and retreated to the hall in dismay.

"But what is it?" she asked, the colour in her cheeks suddenly becoming a bright crimson. "What have you been doing?"

"We—I mean I—haven't been doing anything, miss. It's the rats."

"Rats! In this house?"

"Yes, miss, rats. All over the house they are. It's awful, and they dies sometimes under the parkay, and behind the wainscot, and I can assure you, miss, I don't know which is worse, the smell of them dead or the sight of them living. I hates both with all my heart."

Miss May looked at her searchingly, but made no reply. She was conducted next to the bedrooms. Here the ceilings, not the walls, were damp.

"But I do not understand why there should be damp here," again observed Miss May. "The roof is in perfect condition, that is obvious from the outside."

"You can't keep out damp," said Mrs. Hominy; "it's that insinuat' it creeps in everywhere if a house is empty a long time. Every week this house gets worse; in another month it won't be fit for human creetchurs," and again she nursed her arm.

"But the house has not been empty, you are here to take care of it," observed Miss May; "and as to its getting worse, why should it? You told me it was taken yesterday."

There was something in her manner which made the caretaker vaguely uneasy.

"Is that true—was it really taken yesterday?" persisted the visitor.

"I daresay nothing will come of it," said Mrs. Hominy, getting a little flustered. "They goes off in the end mostly, and no more heard of them."

"I am not surprised—now," said Miss May shortly.

Next they viewed the kitchens and offices. Miss May now took the lead, with the air of one who knew her way about. In the pantry the atmosphere was even more intolerable than in the dining-room.

"And is this also caused by—rats?" asked Miss May with an accent of scorn which alarmed Mrs. Hominy unaccountably.

"I think that's bad drains," she said feebly. "Leastways, I heard someone say it might be drains; p'raps it ain't, but we thought it was drains."

"The drains in this house are perfect," said Miss May, and without another word walked ahead straight into the kitchen.

Mr. Hominy no longer listened behind doors. He had gained confidence in his pupil, and was seated at the kitchen table still enjoying his dinner.

"My brother, just spending the day," said Mrs. Hominy.

"Let that be your last lie," said the visitor. "Mr. and Mrs. Hominy, so far I have only given my Christian name: My surname is Fairfax. I am the owner of this house. You showed a friend of mine over the house the other day. She sent me a full report of her visit. Your conduct has been fraudulent and disgraceful. You, Mr. Hominy, have no business to be here at all. Leave the premises at once."

Mr. Hominy was equal to the occasion. He was used to leaving in a hurry.

"I presume I may remove my personal effects," he said.

"I give you five minutes to get out of my house," said Miss Fairfax, taking out her watch. "If you are not gone in five minutes I shall call the policeman at the corner. I have told him I may need him."

Mr. Hominy's celerity after this was marvelous. In three minutes he was back in the kitchen with his personal "effects" tied up in a large red handkerchief.

"Good-bye, my dear," he said, addressing his wife.

"Oh, don't leave me again, Tom," she said. "It's worse than being really a widow; I can't bear it, Tom."

"How can I stay, and be out of the house the same time in five minutes?" said her husband, obviously impatient to depart. "Say good-bye, my dear, and don't make a fuss."

"I'll come with you. Oh, Tom, let me come with you!" cried Mrs. Hominy.

"Don't be a fool. I must go and find work. You must see I can't take a wife about with me when I'm searching for employment: You may be sure when I get a permanent job I'll send for you."

"You will never send for me, once you've got away," said the miserable woman: "It's too cruel, after my keeping you all these months, at the peril of losing my job, and telling lies for you, and standing the rats, and the smells, and going down in my character as I have, all for you, all for you: Why should I be deserted like this? What have I done to deserve it? Haven't I tried my best to make you comfortable?"

"Yes, my dear, yes, very comfortable; but you've lost the job—overdoing it, I expect—and so I must be off to find one: P'raps the lady won't be too hard on you, as you ain't very confirmed in your bad ways." He was edging towards the door as he spoke.

His wife followed, clinging to his arm:

"You don't even write," she said: "I never know if you're dead or alive; it's so lonely, and dreadful, and I half-starve sometimes. Oh, I wish I were dead!"

Mr. Hominy gave her an indulgent pat on the head.

"Now, now, don't take on," he said: "I prophesy I'll get a job this time, and be sending for you this side Christmas: Cheer up, old woman."

The door shut behind him, and Mrs. Hominy knew herself to be once more worse than widowed. She tottered back to the chair her husband had so recently occupied, and gave herself up to a fit of wild weeping: Presently she looked up and said thickly:

"And how long do you give me to get out, miss? I know I've lost my job, and my character. I deserve it. It's only justice."

"Yes, it would be only justice," said Miss Fairfax; then she paused.

Presently she added in a softer tone: "But justice is sometimes tempered with mercy: Tell me, left alone would you have damaged my house and misrepresented it as you have done?"

"No, indeed, miss, I would not. I did it for him. He breaks my heart time after time, but I can't tear him out of it: He gets over me, I really don't know how: I'm like water with him. I'll not see him now for years, and if I had a home of my own it would be the same—tired of everything he gets, tired of me. That's what makes it so hopeless like."

She looked hopeless as she sat there, her eyes turned miserably upon her employer, awaiting her dismissal.

To her profound astonishment it did not come. She was gently dealt with; just a little occasional overseeing to make sure Mr. Hominy was not present exerting a baleful influence, nothing more. Justice was tempered with mercy.

Shortly afterwards Laurel Lodge, sweet and dry, was let, to a "party" shown round by Mrs. Hominy. She removed, then, to the lodge of a larger house in the neighbourhood, also the property of Miss Fairfax, and this became her permanent home. Of Mr. Hominy nothing was ever heard again:

Tales of My Clients.

By A LADY PHOTOGRAPHER.

Edited by GERTIE DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES.

Beatrice Hannel, an officer's daughter, opens an art-photographic studio in Kensington as a means of adding to her slender income. She here tells some of the most fascinating romances in which, through her clients, she has been concerned. Each story is complete in itself.

VI.—The Man in Rags.

"HALF-PAST TWO!" I cried, glancing at a small silver and ormolu clock.

"Oh! but you needn't hurry away," replied my widow friend, at whose flat I had been supping after a theatre party.

"Hurry away! When already I have outstayed all the others! Indeed I ought to have gone long ago, but a sympathetic talk all about oneself is so reviving!"

"Well, be revived a little longer, Beatrice—there's much more I want to hear. You've told me so many pretty romances connected with your studio, but I want to hear one, dear, with the proprietress of the studio for its heroine!"

I laughed—just a little hardly—and wound a cream-Spanish lace scarf about my head.

"The proprietress!" I echoed, half-contemptuously. "No, no, Brenda, the proprietress will never be a heroine. Pretty romances don't come her way; and sometimes it seems to me that there is a crust of ice around her heart. Naturally, being somewhat young, quite smartly-dressed, not unpleasing in appearance, and possessed of considerable capacity, 'she has her chances'; but they are chances which her frozen-up emotions won't let her take."

"But why not, dear, why not? You, an artist, must know that love is the most artistic thing in the whole world."

"Yes, when life's stress leaves room for it, Brenda. But for women who have taken men's burdens of work, anxiety, and financial emulation upon their shoulders, there seems no place for love," I said. "Perhaps it is a good thing, because love brings heart-ache and regret," I added.

"Not always, dear. Love can be a very beautiful reality—or a very beautiful memory!" answered my friend, with tears in her voice.

Then we kissed each other good-night, and

five minutes later I was alone in a hansom with my thoughts.

How school-girlish it seemed for me to be talking of love!

The very notion was preposterous when, although my heart was full of tenderness for the romances of other people, it held no place for emotions of my own.

How silent were the night-streets of London, and what a particularly giddy cab-horse had fallen to my lot, to be sure!

Just as I had mentally registered these two facts we pulled up sharply, and the driver jumped down from his perch.

"Only going to tighten one of the girths, lady," he remarked reassuringly: "Joey's in one of 'is larky moods ter-night, so——"

But the sentence remained unfinished, anyhow so far as I could hear, because, as though to carry out the veracity of his master's words regarding his "larkiness," Joey suddenly acted on impulse and dashed wildly forward.

One futile shout from the man, one equally futile scream from myself, and I then realised that, driverless and unaided, I was being dashed through the London streets!

All I could do was to hold tight and trust for the best:

There was a huge pile of wood blocks ahead—evidently preparations for repairing the road. Would "Joey" steer to the left, or would he dash straight into the obstacle and thus end everything for himself, the cab, and me, I wondered?

Evidently the latter was his intention, so good-bye to ambition, expectation, hope, success, and all those elements which make existence a prize worth the keeping:

There was no hope, so with one last involuntary scream I lay back and closed my eyes.

I suppose I must have momentarily lost consciousness, because when I found that we had come to a standstill, that the horse—

panting and unhurt—had ceased his wild career, and that I was still seated in the hansom, I experienced a sensation of very keen, though dazed surprise.

"Wh—what happened?" I murmured.

"Nothing, I'm thankful to say," replied a voice from the region of Joey's head; "and if you will get out while I keep hanging on to his mouth it'll be all right."

Instantly I gathered my silken skirts and obeyed, with the result that half-a-minute later I was standing face to face with my rescuer:

And that rescuer, instead of fulfilling the traditions of romance by being a prince, duke, or at the very least, an ambassador, was merely a crossing-sweeper whose broom had been cast aside in the service of a fellow-creature.

Vaguely I felt disappointed, because his voice had led me to suspect a higher social status.

"You have saved my life," was the first remark I made.

"Oh! well, I happened to be about instead of somebody else," he replied carelessly.

Then I looked at him and saw that, despite the unshaven blueness of his skin, and the pitiful raggedness of his attire, he was rather a splendid-looking fellow.

His face was strong, and dark, and tense, with deeply-gazing, grey eyes; his hair, although matted and disordered, was fine and black; his figure, although disguised by a tattered light coat pinned across his chest, was broad and manly; and his swift, fleeting smile was delightful:

In a word, he was exactly the type I have always admired—at least I think so, though of course one can never be very sure of a blue chin, matted hair, *and* a crossing-sweeper!

"I am very, very grateful to you!" was my next somewhat embarrassed remark:

He smiled, and still holding the reins in one hand, lifted up his broom with the other:

"Please—er—don't be grateful," he replied, looking at me very attentively:

"But I am more grateful than it would ever be possible to say or show. After all, life is a precious thing, no matter how much we may run it down, and you have given me my life!" I answered. Then, as he began carelessly flicking away at a piece of straw, I added: "Er—is your cross—er—your—are you stationed near here, as a rule?"

He paused; then coughed and shook his head.

"No, a bit further along," he answered, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

"Ah! . . . : And—er—may I ask your name?"

"John Penfold."

Here I drew out my purse, and to my dismay discovered it only contained a few shillings more than I should require for paying the cabman:

"This is all I have with me," I said, pressing half-a-crown into his hand, "but will you call round and see me to-morrow afternoon? This is my name and address (here I handed him a card) and in return for your bravery and kindness to me I want to try to be of use to you. Will you come round?"

John Penfold put the card in his tattered coat-pocket and answered emphatically:

"That I will—thank you, miss."

"Excuse me," I continued, as the running cabman appeared in the distance, "but—er—you give me the impression of having had bad luck—as if you were new to your calling."

"I have had bad luck and I've not been in—er—in the crossing line very long," he responded huskily: "I took to this (holding up the broom) you know, because after looking round for weeks I couldn't find anything else."

At this point the cabman reappeared, protested that Joey's misdemeanour was only the result of being tickled by a piece of straw that had got fastened into the harness, and, despite the crossing-sweeper's persuasions to the contrary, at last induced me to re-enter the cab.

"Well," I said, when John Penfold had closed the doors, "and once more I thank you very, very much, and I shall expect you without fail to-morrow."

"And I shall be round, miss, without fail. Thank you and good-night," he replied, touching the torn brim of his hat:

Then off Joey went at quite a safe and sober pace, while I was once more left to my own reflections—reflections as to how I should help the brave man who had saved my life.

And already an idea had begun to form itself in my brain:

For some time now I had been thinking of taking a working assistant, but the difficulty had been to find one who would quickly conform to my ways and somewhat unusual methods.

Why should I not train this crossing-sweeper in every branch of working photography, pay him just enough to live upon

during his time of apprenticeship and study, and then give him a liberal salary when he had learnt to do all I required ?

Anyhow I could try him, because surely there is no better way of being kind to any man than by "giving him a chance" ?

The next afternoon, when I had just finished immortalising the fat features of a fat Duchess, word was brought to me by Miss Thorne that "a person named John Penfold said he had come to see me by appointment."

"That's right! Ask them to show him up into my sitting-room, will you, please?" I answered, picking up a bunch of pink roses which the Duchess had left behind, and fastening them among the creamy laces at the bosom of my long, grey velvet gown.

As I left the studio and made my way to the private part of the premises, I must confess to hoping that poor John had left his broom behind, because it would be somewhat embarrassing for my staff to know that a crossing-sweeper had been trained as working-assistant to Beatrice Hannel—fashionable art photographer!

However, my fears were soon set at rest because, as I entered the room, a tall figure, dressed in a neat, blue-serge suit, rose to greet me.

My crossing-sweeper had entirely put off his robes of office, and though the suit was shabby and ill-made there was nothing conspicuous about it. Also he had shaved—an operation which, together with his smoothed hair, fully evidenced that he *was* exactly the type I admire.

"I am so glad you haven't failed me!" was my first remark, as I sat down and motioned him to a chair, after quelling a fierce desire to shake hands.

"A man isn't likely to fail in taking what may be his last chance in life," was the low-spoken reply which went straight to my heart: "You see, I've managed to get hold of some sort of clothes to come in," he added, with a rather bitter smile.

"Yes, I noticed that you had discarded your—er—your professional attire," I answered politely. "And now, Mr. Penfold, please will you carefully consider what I have to say: I find that I require a working-assistant in my photographic business, and yet I have been somewhat chary of engaging anyone who has been accustomed to the methods of other studios. It is always difficult to unlearn, and any small success which I may have gained is undoubtedly due to the fact that certain of my processes and methods are unique—patents, as it were:

Therefore, you see, I require someone trained to *my* ways, and someone who will undertake to keep my trade secrets entirely to himself. If you care to come as articulated pupil in receipt of a small salary, which will, of course, increase proportionately when you become a qualified assistant, I am quite willing to close the agreement. What have you to say?"

For some moments he looked at me without speaking.

"You—you really mean that you will take me—a crossing-sweeper—on trust like that?" he murmured at last, in almost awe-struck accents.

"Of course I mean it."

"But I—I may be a thief and a black-guard for all you know—I have no references to give."

"You *may* be, but I don't think you *are*: Study of faces, Mr. Penfold, has taught me to understand them, and I do not find that my observations are very often led astray: Besides, of course, I can see that some very keen misfortune has brought you so far down in your luck: Not for the world would I inquire into your private affairs, but though bad times may have forced you to become a crossing-sweeper, Nature, education, and association have made you a gentleman!"

And when I finished this speech, which for the life of me I couldn't help making, I saw that there were tears—actually big, manly tears—in John Penfold's grey eyes!

"Well, what do you say to my proposal?" I hurried on, in order to avert any outbreak of emotion which might be imminent.

Then John cleared his throat, pulled himself together, and answered in quite business accents:

"I accept, and I thank you with all my heart, and I promise that you shall never have any cause to regret your philanthropy," he said:

"Philanthropy! Ah! I think gratitude is a better word, Mr. Penfold: But we will not argue over a phrase, as we have so many arrangements to discuss. Will you come and see the studio?" I replied, and as I led the way out of the room I observed that my ex-crossing-sweeper opened the door for me with the easy courtesy of a man who has been thoroughly accustomed to indoor civilisation.

Poor fellow! What a terrible turn Fortune's wheel must have taken for him when it revolved and left him—a crossing-sweeper!

For three weeks after this I saw John Penfold every day and nearly all day long, because as it was necessary for him to learn every branch of my methods, from those of the studio to those of the dark room; and as no one could quite explain those methods except myself, we were naturally a great deal together.

And gradually I began to look forward to his coming—also to become oblivious of the fact that he was an ex-crossing-sweeper.

Then one afternoon—a Summer afternoon when London was full of the season's electric life, sunshine, and flowers—I experienced one of the greatest shocks I had ever known.

I had been giving my assistant a careful lesson in a certain new touching-up process.

"Well, that is enough for to-day," I said.

John Penfold passed me back the camel's-hair brush, and as he did so our eyes and hands met, and clung together.

It was a moment that should never have been, though a moment that my involuntary inclinations were powerless to avert.

I was glad—*glad!*—to see what I saw in John Penfold's eyes, and *glad* to feel what I felt in the touch of his hands!

And he was—an *ex-crossing-sweeper!*

Five minutes later I was alone once more. We had parted without any save briefly conventional words, yet I knew all there was to know—a look had taught the truth of Brenda Whitlaw's words.

"*Love can be a very beautiful reality,*" she had said to me on that night before a restive cab horse brought me face to face with my fate. And now I knew that it was so!

I knew it! I knew it—because an ex-crossing-sweeper had looked into my eyes and held my hands in his!

I had told Brenda that there was "*a crust of ice around my heart*"—and so there was till a man with a broom came and swept it away!

For some moments I leant back with closed eyes and tried to understand this wonderful difference that was made to my life.

I was in love—I, who had always and sincerely believed that ambition, business, and anxiety had hardened all the natural *personal* tenderness of my nature!

It was so strange and unexpected that I almost felt as if my imagination were playing some practical joke. But such was not the case.

But what should I do? Would I be willing to sacrifice everything and play the part of Queen Eophetua by marrying a beggar

man? Undoubtedly he was my equal in everything except position, but then—oh! dear, the fact *couldn't* be got over that if he hadn't saved my life he would still be sweeping away mud and touching his hat for pennies!

At this point of my reflections Miss Thorne entered the room in the somewhat alert and eager manner which she always adopts when there is any unpleasant news to be imparted.

"Oh! Miss Hannel, have you heard about Mr. Penfold?" she began sulkily.

"Heard what?" I queried.

"Why, that he is going to set up for himself. Ada told me that one of the workmen who are repairing the studio mentioned that '*he was busy at Mr. Penfold's place because he was going to set up an establishment of his own.*' Rather mean, isn't it, when you've taught him all he knows?"

"*Mean?* It's *abominable!*" I cried, in an outburst of furious indignation—indignation of which I was almost glad, seeing that it instantly turned my new and unsuitable emotions into justifiable rage. "When I began to teach him I made it a special stipulation that he should never use his knowledge or experience except in my service."

"Of course you ought to have had a written agreement, and—"

"Oh! My dear Miss Thorne, please don't tell me what I ought to do when I haven't done it! And are you quite sure of this—sure enough for me to write?"

"Oh! perfectly. I questioned the man, and he was absolutely certain."

"Thank you. Will you tell Binns, please, that I want an express letter sent in five minutes?"

"I will—yes!"

When Miss Thorne had left the room I scribbled a note which ran as follows, and was marked "Immediate":

I have just heard through workmen that you are "*setting up an establishment of your own.*" I can hardly believe such dishonourable conduct, but it seems to be true. Please write instantly and explain the matter, which, if accurate, is an infamous violation of our verbal contract.

BETRIOR HANNEL.

Four hours later came the answer:

It is true! My establishment is at 10 Victoria Gate, and if you could call to-morrow I will explain matters. I shall not go to you, but shall await you here.

J. P.

The dishonourable insolence of the whole affair left me speechless!

And then again how extraordinary it was! Victoria Gate! One of London's most expensive and aristocratic quarters, where I did not think that even a ducal photographer would be allowed to set up, much less an ex-crossing sweeper!

And who could have financed him?

Probably some rich, elderly, foolish woman who had been fascinated by his attractive face and attractive manners, and who had perhaps allowed him to use a floor of her town mansion as a place of business.

So much for showing substantial gratitude towards a man from the streets!

But I *would* go and see him at his new "establishment," and I would say various things which would insure his never forgetting the interview—or me!

And the next morning, at 11.30, I carried out my intention, with the result that, when I reached 10 Victoria Gate, a liveried manservant showed me into one of the most exquisite drawing-rooms I have ever seen—and one which might have been furnished under my own special directions!

My favourite tints, my favourite piano, my favourite china, pictures, and decorations! Never had I felt more covetous than of this drawing-room—and in fact the whole house—belonging to the crossing-sweeper's financier!

Then after I had time to get into a state of mind which included envy, rage, admiration, and a variety of other useful emotions, John Penfold (attired in immaculate morning clothes and looking more of an ideal than ever) entered the room.

I didn't wait to greet him, but at once broke into a furious onslaught of words.

"I'm very sorry," he answered, when I had quite tired myself out, "but I didn't know that our verbal agreement precluded my setting up a private establishment instead of keeping up my bachelor chambers in St. James's."

"St. James's? Private establishment! But aren't you going to open a photographic studio here?" I gasped.

"Oh! no: This is by way of being a town house, don't you know. I never troubled about getting one before, but now that—er—I have fallen in love and should like to marry, I thought I'd get a decent place ready."

"But—but—it—er—you—the crossing-sweeper?"

"Ah! that was where you judged too much by appearances. Because I happened to be walking home after a fancy dress ball, and for the sport of the thing thought I'd go through London in my crossing-sweeper's get up, you at once took me for the genuine article: You made somewhat of a mistake: I am by way of being rather like a millionaire; my name is Roger John Penfold Strathmott, and there will be a title coming along some day."

"You had no right to—to—take me in as you have done!" I whispered, in a voice that was thick with tears.

"Well, you see, it was the only way."

"The only way—for what?"

"For giving me opportunities of meeting the girl I loved from the first moment I saw her face framed by a scarf of cream lace—the girl who showed herself to be a woman with a woman's heart! Beatrice, you were good to the 'crossing-sweeper'—won't you now give the 'crossing-sweeper' a chance of being good to you—of looking after you and taking care of you as he longs and yearns to do? I got the home ready, dear, before I dared to hope it might have a mistress, but yesterday afternoon, when your eyes met mine as our hands touched, I—I began to hope. Was I justified, my Beatrice?"

"Yes—you—were—justified! And—and Roger—you *will* always remember I gave that look to a crossing-sweeper and not to a millionaire?"

"I—I'm too glad to ever forget! And see, darling (here he produced a pocket-book full of gold and silver coins), these are the wages you have paid me and the preliminary half-crown! Each coin is a talisman!"

"Is it?" I replied, beginning to once more assume the teasing sovereignty of my sex. "Well, until all that money obtained under false pretences is dispatched to a charity, you will not be forgiven."

Five minutes later Roger had written a cheque and addressed an envelope.

"I've obeyed orders—now I want my reward," he said.

"Well, er—it's always wise to take what you want, isn't it?" I answered.

And he took it—with interest.

And thus the self-reliance and strenuous efforts of Beatrice Hannel—art photographer—died a beautiful death in one man's all-protecting arms.

(With this story the series concludes. Next month will appear the first of a series relating extraordinary incidents in the career of a lady secretary.)

Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction.

It is the purpose of this feature to present to the readers of *THE NOVEL MAGAZINE* English translations of the best stories by foreign writers. Excellent fiction appears in the periodicals of France, Germany, Russia, and many other countries, but it is inaccessible to those who do not understand these languages—the pick of this fiction is published here.

A MYSTERIOUS HAUL. * * * * *

By CHARLES FOLEY. (From the French. Translated by Alys Hallard.)

M. Charles Foley is one of the most brilliant of contemporary French authors, and he has many admirers on both sides of the Channel. His stories are written on quite original lines, and always with strikingly original plots. "A Mysterious Haul" shows him in his best vein. M. Foley is also a playwright, and achieved a notable success with "Heard at the Telephone," which was produced in London a few years ago.

LAST Autumn I went to spend a week with Bassier, an old college friend who lives in Auvergne. His estate stretches along the banks of the Sioule and the garden runs straight down to the river. The country round is very wild-looking, and one can spend hours under the alder-trees fishing without being disturbed, as there is not even a footpath between the garden and the river.

On the day after my arrival my friend and I had just finished luncheon and I was preparing to return to my fishing tackle.

"You think of nothing but fishing!" exclaimed my host, laughing: "I have not even had time to tell you that our village fair is on, and that there is a surprise in store for you. Oh, don't wait," he continued, "I see how anxious you are to be off. Well, you don't know what you are missing: First, there is the surprise, and then a bottle of 1848 champagne."

I should have liked the 1848 champagne, but I knew very well that before tasting that I should have to try the Solferino wine, the Sebastopol cherry-brandy, and the Second of December rum.

Bassier delights in chronology, it reminds him of his college days and the only triumph he had when there: a *proxime accessit* for history. He has been proud of his achievement ever since and delights in talking of

Jeanne d'Arc, Marie Stuart, Louis XIV., Robespierre, and Napoleon.

Between times, when he has nothing particular to do, he consoles himself for his bachelorhood by bottling wine and baptising it with the names of all the victories, *coups d'état*, and memorable dates of the last hundred years.

The previous evening I had kept up with him as far as Sebastopol, and the consequence had been that, as I could neither see straight nor keep my arms steady, I had lost a carp which must have weighed four pounds. The thought of this was a lesson to me, and, leaving my friend to his historical reminiscences, I went back to the river.

The fish did not bite, although the weather was favourable; there was no wind, the current was not strong, there were no long grasses floating about, and the water was low—so low, in fact, that, a little higher up the river, one could see the big stones of the old ford, and the country folk with their trousers and skirts turned up, wading through the river from one bank to the other. It was not often they could do this, as when there is any rain the Sioule at once becomes a veritable torrent.

I had not caught anything, perhaps on account of this unusual animation at the ford, when, just as it was getting dusk, the sky clouded over and the wind began to rise.

Annoyed at the idea of returning empty-handed, and of the weather changing, I left my lines in the water. I had no fishing license, but, as my friend was Mayor, I felt sure that no summons would be taken out against me in his garden. Then, too, I did not intend to draw the lines in until it was quite dark. When I had finished setting them it began to rain, and I returned to the house.

At dinner time I sat down to table with a famous appetite, and as the rain was now coming down fast, I felt that I could eat and drink at my leisure. Bassier was delighted, and took advantage of the occasion to regale me with anecdotes more or less historical:

After two glasses of Solferino, one of Sebastopol, and another of the Second of December, he simply beamed on me as he asked:

"Do you feel brave enough to tackle the 1848 champagne to-night?"

"I'm brave enough for anything," I replied.

He went down the cellar himself, and presently returned with the famous bottle all dusty and covered with cobwebs. Without shaking it and without committing the sacrilege of dusting it, even, he turned the corkscrew as gently as though it had been a gimlet that he was boring into a handsome piece of rosewood furniture. He then blew the cobwebs away more delicately than he would have blown a flower bud in order to open it. When the cork was out, he poured the champagne slowly, and lifted the glass in order to enjoy the sight and smell before tasting it.

"What a lovely colour! What a delicious perfume!" and then, after sipping it, he added: "What a flavour!"

He was right, and the proof of the quality of the champagne was that, after trying it, we kept filling our glasses again and again, so that at ten o'clock I was still at table, when suddenly I remembered the lines I had left in the water. I invented some pretext for going down to the river, and, stumbling along, I went through the hall and out into the garden, taking with me a box of wax matches.

I did not feel very safe on my legs, and I had a vision of bottles representing all the memorable dates such as Solferino, Sebastopol, Second of December, and 1848 dancing quadrilles together.

It was a very dark night, the wind was blowing furiously, the rain falling in torrents, and from the river I could hear a moaning

sound. The fresh night air revived me a little, and I said to myself:

"Ah, the Sioule is getting angry, the water is rising."

The sudden contrast between the warm, well-lighted room I had just left, and the dark river, lashed into fury with the storm, took effect on me.

As I walked on, a sudden sadness came over me and a strange terror seemed to take possession of me. I could see nothing but the rough, tumultuous waters of the river rushing along like a torrent in a wild, mountain gorge.

I may as well own that if I take too much wine it always makes me fearfully dismal. I had the sensation, just as one has sometimes in a nightmare, of being transported suddenly to a distance, and I thought I was quite alone in a wild, desolate place.

I shuddered and had a presentiment of some terrible catastrophe which was about to befall me.

In order to shake off this feeling of terror I stooped down, groped about in the wet grass, and seized one of my lines. I had evidently caught something, for there was a dull, heavy weight attached to it and I was able to draw it to the bank, for it made no struggle and came ashore like a lifeless piece of wreckage.

When I had drawn it to the bank, I stooped down, but could only discern a dark mass of something which had been tossed up by the eddy. I put my hand into the water in order to seize my prey, but, uttering a cry, I let go and shuddered with horror. I had touched wet clothes, and hair in sticky plaits, all slimy and drenched.

I drew back with a feeling of repulsion and horror, unable to collect my thoughts, and yet instinctively putting my hand in my pocket for matches. I struck a light with a trembling hand, but it did not last long on account of the wind and rain. I had, however, caught a glimpse of a woman who had fallen back into the water and whose dark hair half covered her pale face.

Trembling all over, I struck another match and shielded it from the wind in the hollow of my hand. By its light I could see in the water not one pale face but three—four—five—six livid faces of drowned persons. I could scarcely breathe, and yet, as though hypnotised, I moved forward nearer to the water and struck two more matches.

This time, nearer to me, quite near, in fact, and swayed about with the current,

I had a horrible hallucination, for I fancied I recognised the face of Napoleon and he was wearing his famous hat. Suddenly he disappeared, and then came Jeanne d'Arc, Marie Stuart, Robespierre wearing a wig, and more and more dead people with livid faces, all staring at me with mournful eyes.

I turned giddy, it seemed to me as though my brain were giving way. I felt sure I had gone mad; and turning round I rushed back to the house as though all these spectres were pursuing me. I ran up the stone steps into the hall, and sank down on a chair, helpless and half dead with terror.

The dining-room door was not closed, and I could see Bassier, still at table, while standing near him was one of the showmen from the fair, his rough overcoat dripping with rain.

"Yes, sir," I heard him say, in a disconsolate tone, "of course I know I ought not to have gone that way, but we were behind time and this saved us a mile of the road to the bridge. I thought we might risk it, and then when we were in the middle of the ford, the water was so high and the current was so strong that my cart upset and all my waxworks were pitched into the river!"

"What a piece of bad luck!" exclaimed Bassier, just as disconsolately. "It's the first time I ever thought of sending for a waxwork show for the fair—with all the celebrated historical characters, too—no—it certainly is a piece of bad luck!"

I did not listen to any more of the conversation. I could breathe freely again now, relieved as I was from the unspeakable horror and anguish I had just experienced.

MISTRESS BINE. * * * * *

By CORNELIA LEVETZOW. (From the Danish. Translated
by Catherine Pochin.)

Cornelia Levetzow is a native of Jylland, and has a considerable reputation as an authoress; her book "En ung Pige's Historie," published in 1860, lately reached its twelfth edition. All her works have been translated into Swedish and German, and some into French and Finnish. She is now living at Lyngby, a village near Copenhagen, charmingly situated among beech woods, and there she finds ample opportunities of studying the childlike, contented dispositions of the neighbouring country-folk. Her stories may be considered as excellent specimens of Danish fiction in its simple form.

"CLOSE your books, Ida, you have not come into the country to read," said my cousin Anna, as she handed my hat and gloves with a determined air which brooked no contradiction.

"We will go off on an expedition without any particular object in view," she continued; "that is just what I like. This is the churchyard; let us go in."

"What an uncommon weeping ash, cousin, and what a lovely wreath hangs on that cross," I exclaimed.

"The pastor's only child, little Hugo, lies buried there; he died many years ago, before my time. When his mother looks at me with her kind, motherly glance, I always think involuntarily of the little white cross, and when I see it her face rises before my eyes again: Would you like to call at the parsonage?"

"Have they returned?"

"No, they are expected late this evening; we must pay our respects to Mistress Bine. This is the garden, but we must not go

through it, the paths have been newly-laid. Peep in, you will see nothing untidy or overgrown; there is not a single weed. There she stands in the doorway. Good-day, Mistress Bine. Do not frown at us; we will rub our feet well."

"I am very pleased to see you, for I was just wondering how to pass the time until my master and mistress arrived, now that all the work is finished. Ah, do not trouble about your feet"—with an uneasy glance at the floor, white as ivory; "the mistress has often said that she longed to see small black footprints there, and that all this fussing was poor compensation for little Hugo. Well, well, we all have our troubles."

She sighed, but gazed around her with evident satisfaction, as if challenging us to point out some defect; that, however, was impossible.

The cooking-stove was polished until it shone like embroidery-scissors, the polished furniture resembled glass, while the smart

curtains draped in folds might have rivaled driven snow in their whiteness.

On the table before the sofa stood a vase of lovely flowers, as well as two bowls with floating fern-leaves, while wild roses decorated the nut-wood chest of drawers under the looking-glass.

We went round the house; every corner was so charming and comfortable that it seemed as if Mistress Bine must be the only unlovely object in this delightful home.

With her dark blue blouse incircled by a broad leather belt, her small, pleated frill, her large apron which really ought to have been taken off, her light hair tucked behind her ears, drawn up tightly from her neck to the top of her head, and there squeezed into the smallest possible compass, she conveyed the impression of a person who completely overlooked external effects, and set every form of vanity at defiance.

That she was clean and tidy could be seen at a glance; there was not a spot on the old blouse, and the darns at the elbows were a real work of art.

"Sit down, little children," she said (this bluntness was characteristic of her); "let me offer you a cup of coffee, it is no trouble at all, especially to-day; this is the 'women's day.'"

"The women's day?" I asked.

"Yes; twice a week the poor women come from the country villages, four at a time, to wash their clothes. They do not annoy us—the laundry and drying-ground are quite out of the way. My mistress found that they had great difficulty in doing their work properly at home, so she made this arrangement. 'It is what our son would have cost,' she said, when people spoke of soap, fire and food. Some people put their fingers in every pie. It will not go on, they said, but it has gone on for more than twenty years. Our Lord permits my old master and mistress to live; they would indeed be sorely missed; we only realise goodness fully when all is over. Such a pastor does not come twice. He might have a very different position," she continued proudly, "but he will not leave his village children for the sake of gain. I hope that they will feel refreshed and quite set up after their trip to Copenhagen. That reminds me, what time is it? Six, only six!"

"How long have you been here, Mistress Bine?"

"Seventeen from forty-six, what does that leave?"

"Twenty-nine."

"That is it; just think, and I have not learnt to behave better than I do. Still, there is improvement, and it was needed, for I was a dreadful girl. In Copenhagen I lived with two old ladies as companion rather than servant, and this was not at all good for me.

"I would not stick to any kind of work, and fell into bad habits of the worst kind. The ladies went out almost every evening; I had to go and fetch them home, as if I, poor, frightened child, did not need protection far more than they. By degrees I grew quite thin, perhaps because I thought myself too fine to eat like an ordinary girl. Then they became distrustful, they would not believe a word that I said, and times were hard for me. My life was a burden. A friendly, sympathetic widow who lived on the ground floor pitied me, and found this situation for me.

"How well I remember one afternoon, about a fortnight after I came here, my mistress sent me with food and clothes to a sick woman who lived at some distance. She told me to return quickly for there was work to be done, but added that I need not hurry too much. This was unnecessary, for the knowledge of coming work did not quicken my steps. I was certainly lazy, but had been over-pressed in my last situation if that could be an excuse.

"On my return, as I passed Pæle Mølle, I saw a crowd of people staring about them as they pursued a swarm of bees with shouts and laughter; they rattled tongs and shovels, all was noise and hubbub. Duty or no I could not resist, I must join the gay throng. Just as the fun was over I heard the evening bell ring, and felt rather frightened, but, being well-accustomed to invent stories, an excuse came readily to my mind, and I immediately began to practise my part, which was to walk with a limp, and pretend that my foot was sprained.

"'I feared that something had happened to you,' said my mistress kindly, sparing me any explanation.

"'Poor child,' said the pastor, 'how did it happen? Something must be done to make it better.'

"I felt quite uncomfortable, but was wicked enough to raise my pitcher aloft as though deserving praise because it was whole.

"'It might easily have been broken,' said my mistress. 'Sit down by the

window, Bine; I will look after the tea, of course."

"There I sat, allowing myself to be waited on and tended, until I grew quite unhappy."

"The pastor put the last touches to his sermon for the next day, and then came in, looking so mild and gentle. His wife sewed quietly after tea, and sang a Psalm; then they asked if I would not like to go to bed, which I was glad to do as I longed to be alone."

"I was obliged to feign lameness, and their kindly 'I hope you will soon be better,' cut me to the heart."

"When I came up to my little room where the moon shone so peacefully in upon the floor through the walnut-trees outside, I threw myself into a chair, and sobbed bitterly. I felt that I was a vile, wicked creature for whom there could be no mercy."

"The scent of the roses came up from the garden through the open window, the nightingale trilled sweetly, everything spoke of blessing and beauty, but I felt that I had rewarded good with evil, darkness and guilt dwelt within my heart."

"After a short time had elapsed, I heard steps upon the stairs, and my mistress entered, a light in one hand, and a bottle and piece of flannel in the other. She looked so loving and sympathetic as she stood there, dressed in the mourning which she always wore for her little child."

"'Still up!' she cried. 'I hope that it is not worse than we thought; I have brought a little liniment, and will rub your foot. No, do not refuse, these things must be taken in time, it is useless to harden yourself against it.'"

"By way of answer I cried so passionately that she became quite angry: I must tell her all or die of shame; I must tell her all, even if she dismissed me at once."

"When my confession was ended, she did not turn away in virtuous indignation, but came close to me, drew my tear-stained face down on to her shoulder, and said: 'Poor child, poor child, you will have much to fight against, but our Lord strengthens honest intentions, and we will do our best to help and support you: May we all have strength thus to confess our wrong-doing at once so that it may be forgiven. Now, come, do not cry, all will go right yet; daily intercourse with the pastor alone will work wonders.'"

"Then she sat by my side, and told me what a pleasure-loving young girl she had

been, for though she well knew the principles and beliefs of her betrothed, she had consoled herself by the thought that these extreme views would become greatly modified in time."

"When she came to the parsonage her head was full of plans for a life which was to be that of a country gentleman's wife to some extent. Her first request must be for a carriage, but it was never uttered; Then she described how much he loved her and how firmly he believed that she was a thorough pastor's wife, quiet, humble, and Christian."

"She could not rob him of this faith; his sermons in church and his home life did the rest; she ended by uniting with him to serve our Lord. Her faith grew when a little child lay in her arms, increased with that loved child's growth, and was sufficiently strong to support her when it was taken away."

"My young mistress said all this far more beautifully than I can repeat it, and we wept together. She waited until I was in bed, then kissed my brow, and went with her light and liniment. I did not need her surgical treatment; she brought me another cure, which I had long needed. From that day I steadily strove to improve; though my efforts were frequently unsuccessful, still I always spoke the truth."

"They were so kind and gentle, allowed the good seed to sprout silently, not disturbing it by discourses and fault-finding, or even by praise. Those who repent are shy, and when some improvement begins to take place it should not be spoken of, indeed, hardly noticed. They said nothing, but relied upon me more and more, and I looked up to them as a weak creature such as I might well look:

"So the years went by one after another; I lived quietly here, and almost forgot (two young girls like you can hardly understand it) that I had been betrothed in Copenhagen:

"Perhaps I forgot because I thought myself forgotten, but in this I was wrong. My old lover wrote from Jutland, saying that he had served his time, and was going to set up the next year as a glazier in his native place, Taarnby in Amager, if I agreed, and still liked him:

"All the old feelings awoke with this letter. I answered immediately that no one had taken his place, so he sent me a ring, and I sent one in return. Through the Winter I sewed and laid plans; towards

Spring we were to meet at his home in Taarnby to make further arrangements about the wedding:

"We had not seen each other for ten years; he had bought a small house where we were to live, I had a bank-book which showed a deposit of a hundred thalers, as well as both linen and woollen stuffs. This was all quite right, but it was not right that I, as I sat beside my lover in the midst of the family circle, should long for my home at the parsonage. They were honourable people, frugal and industrious; however their way of talking was not to my liking. I could not boast of much education, but I had heard sensible conversation, and books well read, and had grown accustomed to see life regarded in a far different manner. Much seemed so strange and narrow. I could not agree with them that the world was contained in Taarnby in Amager. Hans Peter was such a fine fellow, he could dance the whole night long, while I had grown staid and demure beyond my years:

"When we went out together we had nothing to say to each other—what would happen in the future? I saw all this very plainly. One evening, as we strolled in the garden looking out over the beach, his niece Ane ran along singing as she watered the young cabbage-plants. She was a good girl, young, pretty and fresh, and the sight of her gave me courage to say what was best for all of us. I told Hans Peter that he was dear to me, but we were not rightly matched; he ought to find someone who was young, bright and merry:

"He did not take in my meaning at first, then agreed, though rather unwillingly, not so much because he disapproved of my conduct, as that he set great value upon our long fidelity to each other.

"Well, it may be for the best," he said, at last. "You have certainly become quite another person, Bine."

"I pressed his hand fervently when we parted, for he was dear to me as a younger

brother. Ane wept when she knew that we were not to be related, little thinking that their wedding would take place six months later.

"When I drove into the yard of the parsonage I had no ring on my finger, but my heart was light as a bird's. I embraced both men and animals, yes, every living thing, peeped into each corner, told chairs and tables, pots and pans, that now old Bine would never go away again, never. The books on the shelves were like old friends who bade me welcome, and seemed to speak with voices, for I knew what they contained.

"That evening I besought the Lord to let me die before my master and mistress, I could not live without them. It was a selfish prayer, but I have uttered it many times since:

"After this I felt more contented than ever, settled down more thoroughly, and valued my good fortune more highly than when I lived in the future, and dreamt of a home of my own: That is my story, not at all romantic, but glad and joyous, for it is evidence that a supply of undeserved mercy is to be found. There, the clock is striking eight, I must set the table for tea; they may arrive a little before nine."

Anna and I went away in silence: The evening bell sounded sweetly, nightingales sang, the scent of the roses and mignonette was wafted towards us.

I looked back at the walnut-trees through which the moon had peeped at poor, sad Mistress Bine, and then at the tiny children's garments which waved to and fro in the drying-ground of the poor:

The sun had just gone down as we passed the churchyard, its last rays gilded the cross on the little child's grave, a thin white mist hung over the moor, the pale new moon was mirrored in the tranquil sea, and on the high road we saw a cloud of dust, and a carriage with seats for two persons:

It was the old pastor and his wife, returning from their journey to Copenhagen:



This story should be read by everyone who likes a really exciting detective tale. It is one of the most extraordinary and ingenious stories of this kind ever written.

The Disappearance of Nicholson.

By *CYRUS AINSWORTH.*

HOW THE STORY BEGINS.

Henry Arnott, who tells this story, has set himself the task of discovering his friend Jack Nicholson, who has gone away and left his wife and daughter Nelly. That he is not dead is shown by the fact that, at irregular intervals, Mrs. Nicholson receives sums of money in envelopes addressed by him and posted in London.

Arnott reads a speech made by Henry Greville, the Home Secretary, and from its style becomes convinced that, in some way, Greville and Nicholson are connected. He engages a detective named Nick Latozzi to find his friend. Latozzi makes inquiries which lead him to believe that Nicholson died in Walworth.

Nelly Nicholson greatly attracts Arnott, and one day they drive in a hansom to Manchester Square to see the Wallace Collection at Hertford House.

CHAPTER V:

Another Mysterious Remittance:

THE hansom drew up in Manchester Square, and I started from my absorbed mood. Nelly was looking at me anxiously.

"Don't you feel well?" she said.

"Oh, yes, I'm all right," I replied. "I had a sudden thought. It was rather important, and it made me forget myself for the moment. Come, let us get out."

When I had dismissed the cabman, Nelly said to me:

"Was it business? Would you like to send a telegram?"

"No, dear. It doesn't matter; it will wait."

I smiled to myself. I felt so pleased with my own divination that I could have sung aloud for joy. I had beaten the detective. But he had not an equal chance with me. Nothing but my old, intimate knowledge of Nicholson could have given this clue into my hands. However, there was no hurry now. The secret was in my possession. The unveiling could be deferred.

We entered Hertford House.

"What would you like to see first?" I said. "Old armour, historical furniture, *bric-à-brac*, or pictures? There are a number of Meissoniers here."

"Well," said Nelly, "I want to see the Meissoniers, of course; also the Greuzes, and the Watteaus; still, the armour is on the ground floor. We may as well begin with that."

"Have you been here before?"

"Two or three times."

"Ah, you have the advantage of me; I've paid only one visit previously, and that was a brief one."

"I'll take you round," said Nelly. "I know the place pretty well."

And, in fact, I found that she did. We wandered about the ground floor, from room to room, looking at jeweled daggers, convex mirrors, old cabinets, and all the other priceless antiquities. When we went upstairs to the picture galleries my companion's attention was claimed by a group of acquaintances.

"Please excuse me," said Nelly, putting her hand on my arm. "Some of my friends are over there. May I go and speak to them for a minute?"

"Certainly," I replied.

"You won't mind?"

"Not in the least. Run along. Come back when you're tired. You'll find me here."

She flushed when I used the word "tired"; but she went.

I watched the little group that she joined. It consisted of three girls and two young men. Evidently school-teachers, like Nelly herself. They seemed pleased to see her, but to my critical eye Nelly looked a bit out of her class. Her friends were quite presentable, but she was their superior.

One of the young men seemed to be on rather familiar terms with my young friend. He addressed his conversation to her exclusively, and, it may have been my

fancy, but I thought Nelly welcomed his attentions a trifle more than was necessary. Shall I be laughed at if I admit that I felt a twinge of jealousy?

She returned to me after an absence of five minutes. Her beauty was enhanced by a touch of additional colour:

"Have you seen Marie Antoinette's card-table?" I asked.

"The pretty little table with a capital M in the centre? Yes, I've seen it. Isn't it nice?"

"Very nice."

"I'd like to steal it," said Nelly. "Have you any idea how much it is worth?"

"Difficult to say. I daresay an American millionaire would give a couple of thousand pounds for it. Perhaps more than that. Of course it isn't for sale; but if it were it would be worth just as much as it would fetch, and that would depend entirely on the number of would-be purchasers."

"And the lengths of their respective purses."

"Just so. Well, Miss Nelly, if you've seen enough of this classic show we'll beat a retreat. Need you go home to tea?"

"I don't think so." She looked at me with a twinkle of roguery. "I'd love to go to a restaurant."

"Come along, then."

It was ten o'clock when I took Nelly home. She said she had enjoyed herself, and I saw no reason to doubt it. Mrs. Nicholson greeted me with a kind of eagerness, which was explained the first moment that Nelly left us. An envelope and a sheet of notepaper were slipped into my hand.

"I've had another remittance," said the lady, in a stage whisper.

"Good," I said. "Pleased to hear it. I hope it's a useful amount."

"Ten pounds."

"Better than nothing. What is this sheet of notepaper? May I take it away with me?"

"Certainly; the envelope, too."

Then Nelly reappeared, and I made my adieux to them both:

At the hotel I examined my new acquisitions. The envelope was square, very similar to the other square one, postmarked W. again, and the handwriting, so far as I could judge, appeared to be the same, too. The sheet of paper bore three words only: "Ten pounds inclosed." The writing was obviously in the same hand as the address on the envelope:

"Ha, ha, Mr. Latozzi," I said to myself, "what will you say to this?"

The following day was Sunday. As I saw no pressing need for speed, I decided not to work on the Lord's day. I refrained even from ringing Latozzi up on the telephone. Afterwards I regretted this, for when I went round to his rooms on Monday morning he was too busy to see me.

However, I left an urgent message, and late on Monday evening the detective attended me at the hotel. I gave him the envelope and paper.

"Mrs. Nicholson has had another remittance," I said quietly.

He took the papers, compared the writing, and then compared the envelope with the other two envelopes. It was obvious to me at once that his conclusions were the same as my own:

"This is very curious," he said at length. "Does Mrs. Nicholson pretend to be ignorant of the sender?"

"She persists in saying that the sender is her husband."

"That is what she said before. I suppose she feels obliged to stick to it. Myself, I can't regard it as other than a fairy tale. Her husband is undoubtedly dead, and, if you ask my honest opinion, I think she must be cognisant of his death. There was a coroner's inquest, and an account of it appeared in the press. If she failed to see the account some kind friend would be sure to point it out to her. Her present motive for deceiving you I cannot even guess at."

"Nor at the sender of these anonymous moneys?"

"Oh, that's simple enough. The money must come from some friend; perhaps from an old lover. Mrs. Nicholson may or may not be ignorant of his identity; I should imagine she knows it well enough. What I don't understand is why she should persist in saying that her husband is alive. Do you think she is posing as an object for your charity?"

"I'm sure she isn't. I don't think she is consciously deceiving me. I feel that she believes what she says."

Latozzi shook his head:

"You are too charitable, Mr. Arnott."

"There's a watermark on the notepaper. Could it be traced?"

"I had thought of that," he replied. "But I'm afraid it won't carry us very far. Of course, if we could trace the purchaser, who might or might not be the sender of the money, because, obviously, a sheet of paper might have been begged, borrowed, or stolen

for the occasion ; however, if we could trace the sender, we might discover Mrs. Nicholson's motive in faking up this yarn about her husband."

Here I laughed outright. I was enjoying my triumph beforehand.

"My dear chap," I cried, "it won't do! You start with the prejudiced conviction that Nicholson is dead. But you're wrong, man, you're wrong. He is alive."

Latozzi started. My manner surprised him. But his opinion stood firm.

"Have you seen him?" he said sceptically.

"Did you read the Home Secretary's speech the other day?" I retorted.

He looked. He was too polite to say it aloud, but his eyes said: "What the dickens has that to do with it?"

"Never mind the incongruity of my question. Did you reach the speech?"

"Which speech?"

"The big one. The murder speech."

"The Abbeygate murder?"

"That's it."

"I read it. It was very acute. I disapproved of the conclusion."

"It was the finest speech the House of Commons has heard for twelve months. However, the point is this: The speech was delivered by Henry Greville, but another man prepared it, and that was Nicholson."

"Nicholson prepared the speech for Greville to deliver? You mean that?"

"I mean just that."

"Who is your informant?"

"The internal evidence of the speech itself. I knew Nicholson very closely twenty-five years ago."

"It's a long time since then," said Latozzi.

"Attend to me a minute. Nicholson was, and is, the keenest debater and the most severely logical reasoner that ever I met. I don't believe there is a man in the world, other than Nicholson, who could have drawn up just exactly that speech in just exactly that way."

"You are depending on your own conviction?"

"That's quite enough for me."

"For you, yes; but for other people?"

"I have nothing to do with other people. Listen to me now and I'll tell you what I want. First and foremost, I mean no harm to my old friend. What I *don't* want is to get him into trouble, either by unveiling any unpleasant facts which he may wish to keep concealed, or by making investigations which might have the effect

of driving him into hiding or obliging him to resign his present position, whatever that may be. What I *do* want is simply to be put into communication with him: Why he deserted his wife fourteen years ago I don't know; I'm not sure that I care: That's his business, not mine. All I want is to see my old pal."

"I see. You want me to identify him."

"Probably you won't find that very easy: I expect he is masquerading under a false name. What you've got to do is this: Find out the name of the man (secretary, librarian, confidential valet, or whatever he is. I expect Henry Greville, M.P., has a small army of dependants all round him) who helped Greville to prepare his speech on the Abbeygate murder. That man's real name is John Nicholson. I want the name by which he is known to his employer and present associates."

"I quite understand. And about this paper with the watermark? You wish to have it traced?"

"If it will be useful to you; not unless. I think it's very probable that Nicholson sent it, as his wife asserts. But I don't want any alarm raised in any quarter. Whatever you will require to do, do quietly."

The detective smiled.

"Now that I know what you want, Mr. Arnott, you may leave all to me. It is my habit to move always with the greatest possible caution: If it were not so I should have few cases to move in. When people are engaged in anything crooked, it is of the highest consequence not to alarm them."

He paused. There was a lack of finality about his manner: I looked at him inquiringly.

"You don't ask for my opinion of this matter?" he said quizzically.

"You can give it."

"I will: I think you're backing an outsider."

"An outsider?"

"I regard it as a long shot. It may come off, but I think it won't. The crux of the problem lies here: Was the Nicholson who died in Walworth the same Nicholson who got pushed out of Burton Crescent? Half-an-hour ago I would have sworn that he was. If he was, your 'internal evidence' theory isn't worth twopence. I'll admit that you've infected me a bit with your idea, but I'm still prepared to lay six to four on my own."

CHAPTER VI.

Hot on the Scent:

ON the Wednesday evening of the same week I called at Mrs. Nicholson's and found someone there before me. I was introduced to a young man whom I immediately recognised as the too-familiar friend of Hertford House. His name was Richard Dallas.

It was natural that he should pay attentions to Nelly, and that she should receive them as her right. They were the two young people of the party. Mrs. Nicholson and I were the elderly couple. I say it was natural, but I must add that to me it was painful.

I tried not to feel resentful. I told myself that it was my own fault, that I was too old to fall in love, and that Nelly must naturally prefer the company of a man younger than myself.

Young Mr. Dallas was quite presentable; he was a respectable young man, and no doubt his intentions were upright and honourable, but he was not of Nelly's class. If Nelly married him she would marry beneath her.

I left early. I am not a master of small-talk, and the conversation, which was general, did not interest me. When I announced my departure I fancied that a shade of disappointment or annoyance crept over Nelly's face, but I could not be certain of it. Very much to my surprise, young Dallas requested permission to call on me. I gave it, of course; but not, I am afraid, very graciously.

However, he came—the very next evening; and the moment he entered my room I perceived from his manner that he had something definite to say. He was an awkward young man, though. It took us nearly twenty minutes to get through the preliminaries of an ordinary evening call. He spoke of the weather, current politics, the theatres, and other things until I began to wonder whether he was evading the real purpose of his visit. At last it came out:

"Do you know Mrs. Nicholson at all well?" he began.

"I haven't known her very long," I replied.

"I hope you'll forgive me if I seem to intrude," he said.

Then he paused: "Are you as stupid as you look?" thought I: "Ought I to give you a lesson?"

"That depends," I said aloud.

He stared at me open-mouthed.

"Intrusions are pardonable only when there is a real reason for them," I said.

He blushed under the reproof, and immediately I felt sorry for him:

"Come," I said, in a much kinder tone than I had used hitherto, "I don't suppose it is anything very dreadful. Of course, you haven't come to see me out of mere politeness. I knew that all along. Whatever it is, out with it."

He sat up at once, with a look of relief.

"You're quite right," he said. "The fact is, I feel that I need advice. You are an older man than I am, and I thought last night you had a kind face, so I asked leave to call with a view to getting your advice, if you are willing to give it."

I smiled my willingness.

"Go on," I said.

"Well, to cut it short, I"—here he stammered—"I want to pay my addresses to Miss Nicholson."

"I can easily understand it: She is a charming girl."

"Isn't she? By Jove, she is; not half."

I contented myself with a nod.

"Well," he continued, "of course I'm rather young to get married. Indeed, I didn't think of marrying for two or three years. It would have to be a longish engagement."

"Do you think that is fair to the girl? Myself, I don't approve of long engagements. However, that's a matter of opinion. Many men would disagree with me. Go on."

But my remark had diverted his attention:

"Why wouldn't it be fair to the girl?" he asked.

"You want to hear my views? Very well. A long engagement, if by any chance it should go unfulfilled, spoils a girl's chances: An engaged girl is not at liberty to accept the attentions of other men. By refusing them, she may miss a better chance than the one already offered."

He stared at me: He was evidently a slow thinker. I don't believe he grasped half of what I said.

"Why should it go unfulfilled?" he asked.

I shrugged my shoulders:

"We are all mortal. You might die."

"Oh, *that!*" he said, with mighty contempt.

I laughed.

"Ah, you young people never think about *that*. I don't blame you. Death seems a long way off when one is young. But matrimony is a very serious step. Even the improbable considerations ought to be taken into account. However, there's no need to dwell on that side of the subject. Many very worthy people approve of long engagements. In your case, a long engagement may be justifiable, though I personally might think it unadvisable. Tell me what it is you want advice about."

"Well, as I was saying, I don't want to get married just yet, but I thought I might ask Nelly to be engaged to me. The real difficulty is the old lady, Mrs. Nicholson."

"Does she discourage you?"

Again that uncomprehending stare.

"I mean, perhaps she may have other views for her daughter. Does she appear to disapprove of your suit?"

He seemed hurt.

"I don't see why she should," he said. "There's nothing against me. I'm as respectable as she is, or her daughter either."

I lost patience. I spoke severely.

"I'm afraid I'm not quite equal to the intellectual pressure of the conversation," I said.

Another long stare.

"Why do you regard Mrs. Nicholson as a difficulty?" I asked him.

"I should have thought it was plain enough," he said, with open contempt for my judgment. "By all that I can make of it, Nelly keeps her mother at present. If I marry Nelly, I don't want to have to keep the old woman."

It was my turn to open my eyes. He had suggested an idea which would never have occurred to me in a thousand years. He had also revealed his own character so unmistakably that there and then I determined to oppose him with all my strength: I might be a middle-aged fogey; but, whatever my defects, I could be a much better husband to Nelly than she was at all likely to find in this selfish young animal.

I cold-shouldered him at once.

"Isn't that a selfish point of view?" I said.

"Surely it's sensible," he replied, apparently impervious to my coldness. "What I really wanted to get out of you was: Has the old lady any money? You see what I mean? It's a serious question to me. Shall I be doing a wise thing in getting engaged to Nelly? or shall I be saddling

myself with an incumbrance which afterwards I might not be able to throw off?"

"I can't give you any information. I know nothing whatever of the financial positions of either Mrs. Nicholson or her daughter."

My tone was hostile. It must have been very hostile, for the stupid young fool actually noticed it. He looked at me, and a light seemed to break across his face.

"I believe you're after Nelly yourself. Why, you're old enough to be her father!" He laughed aloud.

It was too much for me. I walked to the door, and flung it wide.

"Good-night," I said, pointing to the open door.

"Oh, I say! No offence." I made no reply. "I'm sorry if I've annoyed you," he said. "I didn't mean to."

He was so very apologetic that I felt bound to respond.

"All right," I said, rather wearily. "But I'll ask you to leave me for this evening. I have a slight headache. I daresay we shall meet again soon."

"Oh, certainly!" he said. "*Au revoir*."

* * * * *

In Friday morning's *Times* appeared the verbatim report of another speech by Henry Greville. To say that I perused it eagerly would be to say far too little.

It dealt with a question of party policy in which I took no manner of interest, but I searched it so thoroughly for internal evidence of the Nicholson authorship that, in the process, I got it nearly by heart. It was a less sustained effort, and much inferior to the speech on the Abbeygate murder. Nevertheless, it contained two sentences which were strong confirmation to my awakened mind.

I went to see Latorzi, taking the *Times* with me. Of course, he was out. I saw him later in the day.

"Did you read the speech?" was my first question. He shook his head. I unfolded the paper, and pointed to the two marked sentences.

"I'll look at it directly," he said. "I've got one or two things to tell you."

"Fire away."

"First of all, I've traced the notepaper. It belongs to Greville himself."

"Ah!" I exclaimed triumphantly. "Now what do you think of my internal evidence theory? Will you still lay six to four on the Walworth corpse?"

Latorzi looked a trifle embarrassed.

"No," he admitted, "I won't. Things appear to be going your way, there's no disputing it. One thing I will say. If it turns out that you were right, you'll deserve a great deal of credit for sticking to your guns as you did. I can't pretend that I gave you any encouragement. I thought it a wild-goose chase. We live and learn."

"My dear chap, say no more about it: I needed no encouragement. And, after all, you couldn't have solved the riddle by my method. I had the advantage of knowing Nicholson very well a quarter of a century ago."

"Yes, yes; but a quarter of a century is a tremendous period to remember back. Very few men would have remembered as you have. When one meets transcendent ability, one can't do less than acknowledge it. You're a smarter man than I am, Mr. Arnott, and I'm not ashamed to confess it."

I bowed my acknowledgment. Of course the good fellow exaggerated my smartness; but I could understand his feeling.

"Did you discover anything else? About Nicholson, I mean."

"Not exactly. But I ascertained that the only man who is known to help Greville with his speeches is his secretary."

"Ah! We're getting nearer."

"The secretary's name is Ralph Leftwich."

"What age is he?"

"About forty-five."

"That's my own age. Nicholson is either two or three years my senior."

"One can't judge a man's age to a couple of years from his appearance alone. Upon my word, sir, it begins to look as though you had found your friend. The sheet of note-paper, with the watermark, is a strong piece of evidence. He must have been in a hurry, and used a sheet of Greville's paper without thinking. The cleverest men make mistakes sometimes."

"How do you account for the Walworth man now?"

"He must have been another man. I wonder how many John Nicholsons there are in the world? It was an odd coincidence that he took possession of his flat on the same day that your John Nicholson left Burton Crescent."

"You're quite certain that the Burton Crescent man was my man?"

"Absolutely. His landlady remembers him. He continued his journalistic work all that year."

"How long has Leftwich been with Greville?"

"Eight or nine years. I don't know exactly. But my inquiries are not yet complete."

"Let me know the minute they are: As soon as you can say for certain that Ralph Leftwich is John Nicholson, I'll write to him."

* * *

CHAPTER VII:

Found—at Last:

IT may have been my own fault; in the light of subsequent happenings I am inclined to impute it partly to my own stupidity; but during the next couple of weeks my friendship with Nelly made the sort of progress that one associates with a Hibernian pig. In other words, I lost ground, instead of gaining it.

Dallas came regularly to the house, and I early perceived that his visits were welcomed not merely by Nelly, but also by Nelly's mother. Indeed, Mrs. Nicholson confided to me that she thought him a very nice, unassuming young man. "He is quite quiet and steady in his habits, and a regular church-goer," she told me.

I wondered whether or no it was my duty to unveil his selfishness. I did not attempt it, and I may as well admit that my chief reason was that I feared to be disbelieved.

When a woman forms a prejudice in favour of a man (or against him, for that matter), she has a way of wilfully blinding herself to contrary arguments which it is extremely difficult to cope with. Even if you can persuade her to admit the contrary arguments, she will soften them with excuses until they are practically effaced: Non-interference is the counsel of wisdom.

A fortnight of this kind of thing made me simply unbearably jealous. I found myself positively hating the stupid young man whom, despite his stupidity, I was obliged to regard as a serious rival. It seemed to me that my only course of action was to absent myself from the house.

It was as though a malignant Fate dogged my efforts to avoid young Dallas. I gathered that he was not a more frequent visitor than myself; nevertheless, go when I would, I found him in possession.

If I stayed away three days, it appeared that he did the same, and then we turned up together on the same evening. The thing

became exasperating, quite beyond endurance.

At last I decided to retire. I projected a walking-tour through the Surrey hills, and would have started at once, had it not been for my pressing interest in the result of Latozzi's inquiries. This chained me to town.

One morning I gave the detective a call, and, as luck would have it, I found him in.

"Good morning, Mr. Arnott. I hope you are very well," was his greeting.

"How are you getting on?" I asked, passing on at once to business.

"Badly, I'm sorry to say. Had there been anything favourable to report, I should have given you a call a week ago. The evidence has become very conflicting. I begin to doubt whether Leftwich is the man we want."

"Oh? But I thought you said he was the only man who helped Greville with his speeches?"

"So far as is known, that is perfectly correct."

"Well, to my mind, the evidence of the notepaper seems fairly conclusive."

"It is, so far as it goes. But it doesn't pin down Leftwich. Any dependant of Greville might annex his notepaper. There may be another person in the background who, unknown to the world, or even to Greville's friends, writes Greville's speeches for him, and uses his notepaper."

"There may, of course; but—hang it, I thought we were getting on so well. All the indications pointed to Leftwich. Why do you eliminate him?"

"I've traced his entire career, and it appears to be absolutely straightforward. He was a Harrow and Balliol man, took a Fellowship, entered political life as secretary to the late Lord Middlehurst, and was transferred from Middlehurst's services to those of Greville on the occasion of Greville's marriage. Perhaps you know that Greville married Middlehurst's daughter?"

"I see. And Leftwich was a sort of wedding-present, eh?"

"That's pretty much what it comes to. Lord Middlehurst had a very high opinion of him, and, no doubt, recommended him strongly to his son-in-law. Leftwich is reputed to be very able and learned, but no orator. Otherwise, he might have taken front rank himself, instead of serving other men."

"That doesn't sound like Nicholson."

Nicholson was able enough; but scarcely learned. On the other hand, he was an eloquent speaker."

"I don't think Leftwich is Nicholson: I've traced his career from the University to the present day. There's no hitch in it, and at no point can I connect him with the journalist of *Burton Crescent*."

"Dear, dear. It's very tiresome! And so you fall back on the idea of there being someone else in the background?"

"I don't know what else to assume. Somebody sent that sheet of notepaper to Mrs. Nicholson. I don't think it was Leftwich. Who it was I don't know."

For the space of a half minute we stood and looked at each other. Then I volunteered a remark.

"It would clear the ground a bit if we could ascertain definitely that Leftwich is not Nicholson. Can you make a suggestion?"

"Well, sir, do you think you would recognise your friend if you saw him?"

"I think so. Of course, I should expect to find him altered considerably. He was a young man when I left England. He may have grown a beard, or side-whiskers. Perhaps both. But he couldn't alter the colour of his eyes, nor the shape of his nose, nor the general expression of his physiognomy. Provided I got a good square look at him, I think I'd back myself to know him again."

"You think you would? Well, if you'll meet me in St. James's Park to-morrow morning, I'll see what I can do. Mind, I don't promise you a good, square look; but you may get a reasonable glimpse. Leftwich often dodges about between Downing Street and the Carlton. I've seen him myself on the Duke of York's steps: Greville, too."

* * * * *

Now, although I was still keenly following on the scent of Nicholson, both my heart and mind were far more deeply engaged with Nicholson's daughter.

In a fit of jealousy I had practically decided to withdraw, and leave her to her fate; but a calmer mood bred better thoughts. I could not believe that such a selfish cad as Dallas was, or ought to be, the true fate of such a girl as Nelly. If her eyes were temporarily blinded, all the greater reason that her friends should stand by her.

It is a poor sort of love that runs away

at the precise moment when help is needed. Even if it were only for the sake of my old friendship for her father—the father who had deserted her, confound him—it seemed to me that I owed her any little protection that it was in my power to offer.

Dallas was utterly unworthy of her, and I should be acting the part of a contemptible coward if I allowed her to marry him without making, at least, the strongest protest that was possible under the circumstances.

There was no wisdom in waiting for an opportunity. Resolute men make their opportunities. For once in my life I felt as resolute as a Clive or a Kitchener.

I called at the house within half-an-hour of the time when Nelly was due home from school. She and her mother were just finishing tea. I invited Nelly to a drive in the Park. I knew it was a strong bait. Driving was a luxury to her. She swallowed it as meekly as I could have desired.

When we were actually in the Park, and I felt that I had got her quite to myself, I unflanked my batteries.

"Nelly," I began, with unusual abruptness, "what is all this between you and young Dallas?"

It was immediately apparent to me that I had taken a false step. Her face, which had been smiling happily, turned to stone. Her glance was averted, her head was raised coldly, and her voice, when she spoke, expressed the quintessence of freezing dignity.

"I don't understand you, Mr. Arnott."

"Hang it!" thought I, "I shall do nothing with her now." But, of course, I had to go on.

"I think you do," I said, speaking gently.

No reply from the averted head.

"I can't come to your house without finding him there. He gets in my way like a dog at a fair. Are you going to marry him?"

"He hasn't asked me. I don't know, though, why you should interest yourself in the matter."

"Are you engaged to him?"

"What is the meaning of this catechism, Mr. Arnott?"

"My dear child, it means that I take a deep interest in your fortunes. I am as anxious for your welfare as your own father could be, if he were alive."

"Yes," said Nelly unkindly, "if he were alive, he would be about your age."

I winced.

"First blood to you, my girl," I said to myself.

Aloud I said:

"You know where to hit."

No answer.

"Do you mind telling me if you are engaged to Mr. Dallas?"

"If I were, you would probably have heard of it from my mother." Her voice was very cold.

"Ah! He is biding his time, I suppose. He told me he was not in a hurry."

"Did he ask you to betray his confidence?"

"Nelly, I have excellent reasons for thinking him utterly unworthy of you. I hope you won't make the mistake of accepting him; a mistake you would repent all the rest of your life."

She turned on me a face of scorn.

"Do you think it honourable," she said, "to calumniate a man who is not here to defend himself?"

"I'm not calumniating him."

"Kindly ask the driver to stop. I will walk home."

"No, no; I can't permit that. If you wish to dismiss me, I will walk home. Or, if you will accept a compromise, I'll promise not to speak another word until you are at home."

For a moment she hesitated. Then:

"I accept your compromise," she said.

I instructed the driver accordingly, and for the space of twenty minutes we sat side by side, without exchanging a word. It seemed like twenty years. At last, as we were nearing Mrs. Nicholson's door, Nelly found her voice.

"I wish to thank you for the drive, Mr. Arnott, and to apologise for my ill-temper. But your remarks were quite unwarrantable."

"Perhaps they were, child. Yet I meant them for the best. Never mind; I'm very sorry I hurt you."

At that I saw her face soften. I made haste to ask: "Are we friends again?" I had to wait a little for my answer. At last I heard a small, shy "Yes." It could not be called other than reluctant. But I accepted it gladly.

I was not in a position to make terms. I could not afford to be proud.

"That's right," I said, and squeezed her hand. "Good-night, dear. Take care of yourself."

The "Good-night" that reached me in reply was quite friendly.

"We are in luck, sir," said Latozzi the next morning, as I met him, opposite the Horse Guards: "Greville and Leftwich are in the Mall together, walking slowly in this direction. We have nothing to do but sit tight. They will pass us quite closely. You'll get your 'good, square look' at them both."

The succeeding minutes were closely packed with suspense. I waited calmly enough; but inwardly I felt very excited. Was the mystery of Nicholson about to be solved or not?

"Here they come," whispered Latozzi: "The man on the outside is Leftwich."

I lifted my eyes and took a long, steady look at the pair. The difference between them was marked. A child could not have confounded the Minister with the secretary.

The Minister was a big man, with the air of an autocrat. Power was writ large all over him. The secretary was a thin, bookish man, of fairly familiar type, but an absolute stranger to me. So much I saw in the first second of their approach.

Then I looked hard at the Minister, and I felt my blood surge, and my skin seemed to tighten. My heart went thump, thump: I restrained myself with difficulty; but I did it. I preserved a calm appearance. They passed.

"Well?" said Latozzi: "Did you recognise him?"

I looked him straight in the eyes, and lied firmly.

"No," I said.

I was not going to give away my old friend to a detective:

* * *

CHAPTER VIII:

The Real Truth:

FOR half-a-minute Latozzi looked blank. Then he recovered himself.

"Well, well," he said, "I didn't really think Leftwich was the man."

"I feel a bit disappointed," I replied: "I haven't been very well for two or three days. I think I'll go out of town."

"Let me see you to the hotel, sir," said Latozzi. "I'm sorry you are disappointed."

"Don't trouble. I'll get a hansom: By the way, you'd better send me in a

bill. I must be owing you quite a lot of money."

"No hurry about that, sir. I was hoping to have completed the case before sending in my account. This is a bit of a set back."

"It is, rather. I feel hopeless. I'm in two minds whether to chuck up the whole thing."

"Oh, my dear sir! Don't do that. Somebody sent that letter to Mrs. Nicholson: We have got to find out who it was."

"If you think you can," I said, turning away:

He followed me:

"Half-a-minute, sir. Just one word. Am I to go on with the case or not?"

I pretended to hesitate:

"I'll think it over," I said: "I'll write you. Don't do anything till you hear from me. Send in your bill. I'll let you have a cheque by return post."

"That's all right, sir."

"You understand me. I don't want to keep on throwing good money after bad. There seems no end to this job. This morning's disappointment is the last straw. Besides, I want to leave town. However, I'll write you."

He hung on as long as he could, but I got rid of him at last. I felt like one in a dream. I was completely staggered at the importance of my discovery. I wanted to be alone to realise it. And at heart I was intensely fearful lest Latozzi should guess what I had seen. If he did guess it, could I trust him not to betray Greville, or to blackmail him? I couldn't feel sure.

Already Mrs. Nicholson's prophecy began to be fulfilled. I was more than half sorry I had undertaken the search. True, I had succeeded. I had found Nicholson. But there was no satisfaction in the success. On the contrary, I felt frightened:

What was the meaning of the magnificent imposture? How had the insignificant journalist climbed into the high place of the Cabinet Minister? And what was he doing there?

I recalled the brief biography in "Who's Who" and groaned aloud. Nicholson had never been in India with Lord Roberts. If he had ever seen Sandhurst, it was as a spectator, not as a student. And he had committed bigamy. He had dared to marry an Earl's daughter; he who had a poor wife drudging in South London. It made me ill to think of it:

I returned to the hotel, announced that I felt unwell, took a sedative, and went to bed. Perhaps it was the best thing I could have done.

In the morning I woke up calmer, and feeling a good deal refreshed. Amongst my letters I found Latozzi's bill. It was tolerably stiff. I paid it at once, and wrote him that I had decided to abandon the case, and was going out of town. Fearful lest he might suspect anything, and watch my movements, I actually went out of town. I retreated to Eastbourne, where I stayed a week.

It was not a happy week. I was concerned about Nelly; but I felt obliged to leave her for the present. I anticipated no urgent danger there. Dallas did not appear to be in a hurry, and, even if he bestirred himself, I thought it quite probable that my unwelcome advice had given Nelly food for reflection. She was not a fool. Naturally, she had thought me unkind at the moment; but a calmer mood would follow, and my words might bear fruit.

The Latozzi-Greville-Nicholson entanglement seemed to me far more serious. I had aroused Latozzi's attention, and this it was impossible to undo. I could only hope he would drop it.

I now regretted having paid his bill so quickly; because, if he intended to continue the case alone, obviously I had furnished him with the sinews of war. It might not have made any difference, though. I knew nothing of his financial position.

I wondered what, if anything, he would do. I had no reason to regard him as a blackmailer; but his calling, that of a private detective, did not lift him above suspicion.

That he would deduce some inference from my relinquishing the case seemed certain; yet it would have been at least equally dangerous to allow him to continue, besides being an absolute waste of money.

The evidence actually in his hands was too slight to enable him to damage Greville openly. If he were a blackmailer, he might think it enough to justify him in approaching Greville with a carefully-prepared bluff.

Here I smiled. I felt that if those were his tactics, I would not give much for his chances of success. Unless the new Greville were a very different man from the old

Nicholson, I thought him more than capable of handling severely a blackmailer who tried to bluff. Latozzi would require absolute evidence to play that stroke successfully.

On the whole, that aspect of the affair looked safe enough. Latozzi could not do much harm, if he wanted to; and the fact that all future expenses would come out of his own pocket might be relied on to diminish his interest rapidly.

Thinking thus, it seemed to me that when I returned to London I might approach Greville personally. The risk would be slight enough, and one must always chance something. I had got over my fright now, and was consumed by curiosity.

I tried to draft a letter to my old friend. Memory came to my aid. In the old days both Nicholson and I had been rather punctilious about keeping small engagements which many of our friends broke without scruple.

In connection with this point, an old-fashioned proverb had been current between us. Millions of other people had used the same proverb millions of times; but Nicholson and I had so stamped it with the seal of our usage, that we had grown to regard it as our exclusive property. The proverb was: "Said Word is Thrall." It occurred to me that if I included this old citation in my letter Nicholson would be convinced at once of its genuineness.

Accordingly I wrote my letter, and on the evening of my return to town I posted it. I addressed the envelope to Henry Greville, M.P., marking it "Private and Personal." The letter was as follows:—

MY DEAR JACK,—Said word is thrall. I have recently made the acquaintance of two ladies, mother and daughter. The latter is a charming girl, and she reminds me in many ways of an old friend.

Can you spare me ten minutes? Name your own time and place. There is a man in town called Nicholas Latozzi. Perhaps you have never met him. If he should blunder across you be on your guard.

With best wishes, in all sincerity of friendship,
I am, yours ever,
HENRY ARNOTT.

An answer reached me the following afternoon. It consisted of one line, unsigned, undated, marked with no address. But I noted the water-mark of the paper, which was as before:—

Said word is thrall. Ten o'clock, Sunday morning, my private residence.

(The concluding chapters of this extraordinary story will appear next month.)

First Stories.

My invitation to readers who have never yet had a story published, to submit specimens of their work has been well responded to. This month I am publishing two of the stories received, together with my comments upon them.

A DOUBLE SALVATION.

A tale of a woman's love.

By W. F. LYONS.

THE death of my father when I was in my twentieth year wrought a material change in my fortunes. I had been brought up with the idea that I should be, if not wealthy, at least comfortably well off. My father was a solicitor, with a large and old-established practice. I was, therefore, painfully surprised when, on examining his affairs, I found that, after settling all debts, my mother and I were left with but a very slender income.

My chief regret was that I had to relinquish my ambition of a University career, and find some occupation in order to keep the proverbial wolf from the door.

I was fortunate enough to obtain a berth with a large City firm through the influence of a distant relative, who occasionally condescended to acknowledge the kinship.

For some years I was unable to allow myself a real holiday. I had the customary "fortnight off," but anything in the nature of a foreign trip, or a sojourn at the sea-side, was out of the question. I would spend my "fortnight" at home, contenting myself with long walks in or around London, with an occasional visit to some picture-gallery or museum.

One day—I was then four and twenty—the distant relative to whom I owed my post in the City condescended once more to remember me, and sent me a £10 note for my holidays. After much consultation with my mother, I decided on a trip to Normandy, to the quaint little town of Argentan.

The weather was ideal, and I revelled to my heart's content in the unique scenery of Normandy, with its smiling orchards and gold-crested corn-fields.

In my rambles around Argentan I frequently passed a tall, well-set-up man, attired in deep mourning, his hair like driven snow. He seemed to be ever on his way to or from the pretty little cemetery, nestling among the trees on the distant hillside. What attracted my attention was the look on his face—as of one who had passed through the crucible of bitter sorrow, and yet over it all an air of peaceful serenity.

I was sitting outside an inn a few miles out of Argentan one bright morning, talking to the landlord while discussing a glass of his excellent cider, when the tall stranger passed along. He nodded to my host, who returned the salute and murmured

"Poor Pierre!" Scenting a story, I questioned the landlord, and he told me the man's history.

"Poor Pierre Masson! Yes, I know him well. Ah, his is a sad story, Monsieur. He was a good lad, the best boy and brightest scholar in this village—everyone expected great things from him. Poor Pierre!"

It appeared that when Pierre had finished his schooling he wished to be articled to a lawyer. His father was opposed to this project and insisted upon the boy learning a trade. "For generations we have been in trade," said Pierre's father; "trade is good enough for you—no idling away your time in a lawyer's office, learning upstart and dissipated ways, and perhaps looking down on your old father and mother." So Pierre was apprenticed to a local miller.

But the thwarting of his youthful ambition seemed to have changed his nature. He became sullen and morose, yet fulfilled his duties at the mill with precision and regularity. Pierre, however, was deteriorating—he associated with the most idle and dissipated youths of the place, and learnt, like them, to sneer and scoff at religion as something out of date, fit only for women and children. He was hail-fellow with avowed free-thinkers and socialists.

When Pierre was about twenty his mother died, after a brief illness—her last moments saddened with the thought of her boy's future. Then, a few weeks later, his father had a fit and fell from a high scaffold, and died without recovering consciousness.

There is no doubt that this two-fold calamity sobered Pierre for a brief period. He was no longer seen, for a time, in the company of his usual associates.

It was hoped that Pierre would now steady himself—"as ranger," as they express it. Already the tender passion had entered his life—Pierre was wooing Marie Lenoir, the daughter of the station-master at a junction five miles away—and love seemed to be exercising a benign and refining influence upon his character.

Marie's father consented, with some misgivings, to the marriage, and, through his influence with the railway company, obtained for the young people the charge of a level-crossing on a branch line a short distance from Argentan.

All too soon, alas! Pierre's old habits began to reassert themselves, his old boon companions

sought him out, and the poor little wife spent many a long evening in tearful solitude. More than once Pierre had returned at a late hour, flushed with drink, and had roughly abused Marie—the day came when he was wicked enough to raise his hand against her. But generally these fits of rage were short-lived, and with a shamefaced air he would beg his wife's forgiveness the next morning.

In vain did Marie plead with him, in vain did his father-in-law point out that the railway authorities would dismiss him from his post. Matters grew worse and worse, and but for Marie's careful discharge of the duties, the young couple inevitably must have lost their employment. Pierre was nominally responsible, but troubled little about the duties, leaving everything to Marie.

The branch line was a short one, connecting two industrial centres—the traffic was not very heavy. Three times each day a goods train would pass, and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one train, due to reach the crossing at midday, had to be side-tracked to allow an express through at 12.15. The siding was only a few hundred yards long, ending at the brink of an old, disused quarry. The points and signal were operated by a hand lever just outside the gateman's cottage.

One night Pierre returned home decidedly the worse for drink and very violent. He spoke—thickly, as intoxicated persons will—much blatant nonsense about reforming society, striking a blow at rich capitalists, the glory of anarchism, which he called the new gospel, and so forth.

Terrified, horror-stricken, Marie listened in silence. She had long suspected that her husband was enrolled in an anarchist association which had lately appeared in the district. Next morning her fears were confirmed and realised, for in sweeping out her little kitchen she found a torn and crumpled scrap of paper, evidently part of a letter. She read:—

... Pierre Masson—the gateman at the level crossing ... express into the old quarry ... Directors of the Company traveling ... death to all tyrants.

Clearly a plot was on foot to wreck the 12.15 express, and, Merciful Heavens! her husband's hand was to hurl the living freight to death.

Each morning the guard of the first train to pass over the section, about 7.30, would drop a card bearing the order of the traffic for the day. Not once in three months did the daily orders vary: three goods trains, and on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the midday goods to be switched on to the siding, to allow the 12.15 express to pass. On this eventful morning, however, the order of the day was varied: the midday goods would not pass until the express had gone through.

It was 7.30, the first train of the day had steamed past the cottage, Marie was reading the order-card, and noting the change of trains. Pierre, coming up behind his wife, roughly snatched the card from her hands and placed it in his pocket.

That morning, contrary to his invariable custom, Pierre dawdled about the place, silent and morose. About midday Marie glanced at the clock, then moved to the door, with the intention of setting the points through and locking the lever.

"Come back!" thundered Pierre. "To-day, I'll see to the points."

Terrified, Marie hesitated a moment, then moved again in the direction of the lever. With a cry like some wild beast, Pierre sprang at his wife,

felled her to the ground, and rained swift blows upon her head and face. Then, seizing her light form in his strong, muscular arms, he bore his unresisting burden up into the little bedroom overlooking the line. With an awful oath, he kicked the door open, then flung his fainting wife on the floor, shutting and securing the door on the outside.

Stunned, bruised, sick at heart, Marie lay there she knew not how long. Gradually consciousness returned. "Where am I?" she murmured, and slowly the memory of recent happenings came to her.

A shrill whistle sounded in the distance.

"Holy Mother, the express!" she cried, dragging herself on hands and knees to the door. Her terror increased when she found the door secured on the outside.

A dull, rumbling sound now reached her—the thundering of the express as it raced along, nearer and nearer to its doom.

"God in Heaven strengthen me!" she prayed.

With many a groan, many a deep-drawn sob, Marie succeeded, with agonising pain, in dragging herself to the window, and with nervous, trembling fingers managed to throw it open. The cool air blowing on her face seemed to put new life into her, the mists rolled away, and everything became clear to her vision.

She could see, not a mile away, a dark object through the trees—the doomed train!—doomed, indeed, unless Heaven helped her to save it; and below she saw the points set for the siding, while the signal announced the line clear. Pierre had disconnected the signal from the switch!

"Pierre," she cried in agonising tones—"Pierre!" But no sound reached her save the throbbing pulse of the iron monster as it rushed towards her with lightning speed. Then flashed upon her the Heaven-born inspiration—she could save the train and save Pierre.

Nerving herself by a supreme effort, she climbed to the window-sill, and, springing with all her might, she fell across the lever. The impact of her frail body was sufficient to deflect the lever—a thrill shot through her being as she heard the points spring back with a click, shutting off the siding just as the express thundered past.

"Thank God! Saved!" she murmured. Then a blissful stupor stole over her senses.

Inside the cottage sat Pierre, his head pillowed on his arms, his mind a whirl of terrifying thoughts. As in a dream, he noted the passage of the train; terrified, terror-stricken, he awaited the thundering crash announcing the destruction of the express as it dashed over into the old quarry—for the driver could never pull up the train in time to avert the disaster.

To Pierre's surprise, and to his joy, for now his better nature had asserted itself, there came no answering crash. He could not understand it. By a miracle, it seemed, God had saved the express from destruction.

A revulsion of feeling swept over him, and, falling on his knees, he cried: "My God! I thank Thee!" While he was yet praying, the electric bell over his head tinkled tremulously, announcing that the express had passed the next crossing some miles away.

Dazed, not understanding what had happened, he sauntered forth from the cottage—then the miracle was made clear to him. The senseless form of his wife was stretched across the hand lever.

Tenderly, this time, he carried the unconscious body of Marie into the cottage, raining not blows, but warm kisses, on the dear face.

A doctor was called in, but held out no hopes of Marie's recovery. She lingered a few days in great pain, but consoled by the fact that Pierre was his real self, and now, indeed, loved her. Her last words were: "God bless you, Pierre; love and serve God." Then came the end. . . .

Pierre kept his promise, and from that day was a changed man. He gave up his post and left the cottage, for ever associated with the crowning tragedy of his life. He gave up his old haunts and companions, and spent his days relieving the poor and destitute. And every day, be it wet or fine, in Summer or Winter, he may be seen wending his way to the cemetery on the hill, where he spends much time tending Marie's grave.

[This is a good, all-round story, smoothly told, and, though the plot is slight, the style of writing compensates for this, with the exception that sometimes the language is a little too melodramatic. There is one objection to it, however, and that lies in the first six paragraphs, which have no connection whatever with the plot; with advantage these could have been replaced by a few lines of introduction. The author ought to persevere; he evidently has great possibilities.—Editor, NOVEL MAGAZINE.]

THE CASHIER'S ROMANCE.

The story of a dishonoured cheque.

By JOHN EMRI'S.

SCENE—Llanseithin, a growing seaside resort on the Welsh coast. Time—a sunny afternoon in early June. The town clock struck three in a sharp, brisk fashion, as if suggestive of a desire on the part of the clock to get over an unpleasant duty in the least possible time.

With admirable punctuality and an alacrity probably enhanced by a hasty glance at the blue sky, the junior clerk at the big bank in High Street proceeded to close the heavy outer doors of the building.

The interior of the office immediately began to bustle with life as books were being banged about and coins shoved and weighed prior to the balancing for the day.

Half-an-hour later the figure of the young cashier, Ivor Wynne, emerged through the side door. He stopped for a minute at the entrance, looked up and down the street, and then, as if reassured by the warm sunshine, turned off in the direction of the seashore.

He walked right along the promenade, then round the bend in the cliffs, until he came to Traeth Gwyn, a small, pebbly beach, where he proceeded to stretch himself full length under the shade of an overhanging rock.

Wynne had the Welshman's imaginative nature and a soul full of poetry and romance, and that day in the office he had done a thing which he felt sure his manager would have dubbed a bit of "romantic foolery."

He could not account for his action even now. Usually cool enough, he had for a moment been taken off his guard by a pair of bright blue eyes at the counter, and almost before he knew what he was doing he had handed the money for the cheque.

The cheque was on a London bank, and the drawer a perfect stranger to him. He had forgotten even to ask her address. But as he recalled the dear, sweet face under the white tam-o'-shanter, he did not feel sorry that he had departed for once in a way from custom and rule.

He laughed to himself at the very idea of fraud

in connection with those trusting, if mirthful, eyes. He began to speculate as to her identity. Probably a visitor. "Irma Trevelyan." What a sweet name!

Here his meditations came to an abrupt stop as some sounds other than those born of his immediate surroundings struck upon his consciousness. Some familiar snatches of a popular song came floating towards him. Surely it was a girl's voice—a clear, bell-like soprano.

He got up and tried to locate the melodies. They seemed to proceed from somewhere behind another rock down by the water's edge. Beyond this he knew there was another beach, Traeth y Granog, but only accessible from that side by way of the rock.

Wynne's curiosity was aroused and he climbed up the steep side. Looking down from the top he caught the glimmer of a white tam-o'-shanter, and it burst upon him that his somewhat vague expectations had been realised. The heroine of the cheque stood beneath him. The blue eyes met his own and he fancied there was recognition in the look she gave him.

"Oh, I am so glad someone has come! I'm afraid I've been a little too venturesome. I did not calculate that the tide would reach this rock so soon. It looks steep, too," she said half-appealingly.

The rock, though steep, was not very high just there, and our hero found that when he had gained a foothold half-way down, he could just reach her outstretched hand with his walking-stick. By means of this he gently hauled her upwards, and a few seconds later both stood on the top. She murmured her thanks, and, looking at him with mirth in her eyes, added:

"I believe we've met before, haven't we? I seem destined to be your debtor. This morning you rescued me from an embarrassing financial difficulty, and now— Well, I don't know how to thank you. I was just beginning to have visions of a watery grave."

Wynne laughed.

"That melancholy prospect did not seem to depress you unduly. Comic songs and watery graves seem to me to be—well, just a little bit incongruous."

"Oh, that is too bad of you. Why, I am always singing. I was singing just then for company's sake. 'Yes, indeed,' as the natives about here say, I was really very frightened. But"—looking at her watch—"I must hurry up. I had no idea it was so late. Father will be waiting tea for me. We are staying at the Glan Aber Hotel, you know."

"Are you making a long stay?" he ventured, as they strolled along the beach together.

"Well, it depends on father. He may be called back to town any minute, though I must confess I shall be sorry to quit this lovely spot. You see, this is my first visit to Wales, and so it has all the charms of novelty. Besides, the language is so quaint, and I find the inhabitants so interesting, and"—with a sly look at Wynne—"so obliging. Even bank cashiers here figure as heroes of romance."

Wynne coloured. He had a strong suspicion that she was making fun of him. Even when her face wore its most serious expression there seemed to be some lurking merriment in the depths of those eyes. When they parted on the promenade he felt that he had all the symptoms of a man hopelessly and helplessly in love. He had handed her his card before leaving, and expressed a polite hope of a future meeting.

"We shall see, but I don't suppose I shall want any more cheques cashed," was her parting sally.

He saw her no more that day nor the following, even though he haunted the seashore generally, and the vicinity of Glan Aber Hotel in particular, till a late hour in the evening.

It was with a heavy heart that he commenced his day's duties on the second morning after his little adventure. He was wading listlessly through the correspondence which his manager had brought him, when all of a sudden he held his breath, and his heart almost stopped beating as he came across the cheque which he had cashed a few days before.

There it was, staring him in the face. Irma Trevelyan's cheque for £20, payable to self, returned dishonoured, and with a covering letter from the bankers stating that the drawer had no account with them and was quite unknown.

Wynne could not for the moment take it all in. Surely there must be a mistake somewhere. He could not bring himself to believe his heroine guilty of a low, common fraud.

He did not remember afterwards how he got through his work that day. He was glad when closing time came, and as soon as he had balanced his cash he hurried out of the office and made his way towards the Glan Aber Hotel. It would be a good excuse to call to see his charmer, and everything would be put right.

In reply to his inquiries at the hotel he was informed that Colonel and Miss Trevelyan had left hurriedly the day before, being called away by a telegram. No; they had not left any address.

So his worst suspicions were at last confirmed. Father and daughter were evidently a pair of vulgar adventurers. He saw what a fool he had been, and how neatly he had been done. And yet—

But what was the use of vain argument? There was no getting beyond the facts. This sudden

disappearance could not have been a mere coincidence, even though "she" had suggested the possibility of an early departure.

"What a ludicrously pathetic figure I must look," he said to himself, as he lay in bed that night, turning the matter over in his mind. "It's not a bit of good communicating with the police," he thought. "I shall only appear more ridiculous, and I don't want everyone to know what an ass I've been."

He also decided to keep it, if possible, a secret from the bank authorities. Rather than report the matter and expose his lamentable lack of caution, he would make good the twenty pounds from his own slender resources. But the monetary sacrifice which this course involved did not grieve him nearly so much as the fact of his shattered faith in his idol.

* * * * *

It was three years later, and Ivor Wynne was in London, to receive the appointment of manager of an important branch of the bank.

He was not conscious of any great elation as he made his way from the bank's board-room to his hotel, and later on in the evening as he took a cab to the Olympian Hall he was in almost a melancholy frame of mind. "The music will cheer me up," he soliloquised.

The celebrated hall, the "home" of first-class music, was fairly full when he took his seat in the stalls, and the overture had just commenced. A dull apathy stole over him. The music of the orchestra was so sadly reminiscent. He was almost sorry he had come.

Presently he became aware that the audience was cheering wildly, and, looking up, he saw a fair soloist bowing on the stage. He looked again and gave a start. The face was strangely reminiscent, like the music.

He consulted his programme for the name. "Miss Gwyneth Paul." Part of it was Welsh certainly, but he did not remember that he knew anyone of that name. He must have been mistaken. But the first few notes from the rich soprano voice laid low his doubts.

Yes, it was Irma Trevelyan, looking a shade older perhaps than when he had last seen her, but otherwise just the same, just as beautiful as ever.

He recalled the other scene, where he had first listened to that voice in song, and looking again at the singer, he felt that all the rest, all the prosaic developments that came later, must have been a dream, a horrid fantasy.

Surely such a glorious creature could never have stooped to anything so paltry and ignoble.

He could not endure the strange contradictions of thought which came to him, so he made his way out quietly, when the audience was clamouring for an encore. He did not go to the stage-door, as he had rashly intended at first, in order to request a private interview, but, on making inquiries at the box-office and representing himself as a friend of Miss Paul, he discovered that she lived in rooms at 7 Glendower Square, W. He contented himself with this for the time being, and returned to his hotel.

All through the night he debated with himself whether he should call and try to see her, but when morning came he was still undecided. It was only in the afternoon, when he realised that some instinct was guiding his footsteps westwards, that he finally made up his mind.

Glendower Square was not far off, and he had no

difficulty in finding the well-known street, with its swell residential buildings. No. 7 was no less magnificent than its neighbours. "Yes, Miss Paul was at home. Would he kindly wait in the drawing-room? She would see him presently."

He did not hand the servant his card, but merely said that "a gentleman would like to see Miss Paul."

He had no time to make more than a brief survey of the room, with its exquisite furnishings, before the door opened, and he was at last face to face with Irma Trevelyan or Gwyneth Paul—whatever her name might be. He felt the old fascination as the lovely form advanced towards him.

There was a look of surprise and mild inquiry on her face. Then she seemed to remember, and came to him with outstretched hands.

"Why, Mr.—— Wynne?" she burst out. "You did give me a fright. I couldn't remember just for the moment. What a treat to see someone from dear old Llansethin. But whatever are you doing up in town? Have you chucked the bank and embarked on a literary career? Do tell me that you haven't come to interview me for 'copy.'"

Wynne was not prepared for this reception. He could only manage to stammer out interrogatively: "Miss Paul?"

"Yes, that is my professional name; but how serious you look," she laughed. "Surely you do not object to my adopting Gwyneth, in memory of my Welsh visit? It is only a few friends who now know me under the old name—Irma Trevelyan."

Then, as she saw the look of perplexity still on Wynne's face, she continued in a more restrained tone:

"You see, when father died about two years ago, just a few months after we returned so hurriedly from Llansethin, I was left alone in the world. His pension as a retired Indian officer ceased, of course, with his death, and as he had never been able to save much, I was in a practically penniless condition. It was then my musical training came in handy. Well, you can guess the rest. The world has not been unkind. And now," she wound up, "I revel in the luxury of a banking account again."

Wynne felt the ground slipping away from under him. He must hazard a point-blank inquiry, though it seemed terribly brutal.

"You do not happen to remember, I suppose, a

little incident of a cheque for £20 which I cashed for you three years ago?"

"Why, of course I do. I had only just started a banking account then for household expenses. I believe that was about the first cheque I drew. I well remember how, having come away without the cheque-book given me by the bank, I borrowed a blank cheque from a lady friend staying at the hotel. Luckily for me she happened to have an account with the same bank. But enough of business——"

"Excuse me," interrupted Wynne, a light beginning to dawn upon him. "Do you recollect the name of your former bankers?"

"Yes," she said, looking at him inquiringly. "It was the London and Suburban Bank."

"But the name of the branch."

"Oh, I opened the account at their office in Bayswater, if that is what you mean."

"Ah! That accounts for it all," he replied, with a deep breath of relief. "The cheque which I cashed for you was drawn on the London and Suburban Bank right enough, but on quite a different branch. I've got it with me now," he added, as he took the soiled slip from his pocket-book. "See—London and Suburban Bank, Ltd., Lothbury—that is their head office. You had no account with them, so of course your cheque was returned unpaid."

"But—I don't see. If the cheque was not paid, well, I have been twenty pounds better off than I ought to be, at somebody's expense. Did you——" She paused, as a horrible suspicion dawned on her.

Wynne laughed indulgently. "Oh," he said, fingering the cheque, "this is well worth the twenty pounds I paid for it. I think I shall have it framed in memory of my *cheque-red* career."

But Irma did not even laugh, and when Wynne asked her whether she ever used to check the entries in her bank book, she moaned helplessly as she reflected that if she had done so she would have discovered that the cheque had not been debited.

It was only when the conversation took another turn, when Wynne told her of his promotion, that she began to show any interest. But when he finally bade her adieu, Wynne felt that what had promised to be a very prosaic meeting had in the end turned out quite different.

Our story proper ends here, but just to allay curiosity it may be mentioned that the famous singer's business affairs are now in competent hands. Even the banking account is in their joint names.

[This story is somewhat commonplace, though at the same time it shows signs of promise. The author should try to improve his style, which at present possesses no distinctive features. Puns, such as the one in the fourth paragraph from the end, must be avoided at any cost, except in humorous stories.—Editor, NOVEL MAGAZINE.]

Poor Old Mother.

By L. G. MOBERLY.

In this story Miss Moberly gives us one of the most beautiful studies in pathos that it has ever been our good fortune to read.

DURING her lifetime the world in which Mrs. Septimus Martin moved had regarded her as a very commonplace individual; it was only after Death had set his seal upon her pathetically ordinary face, that she reached a level of importance to which in life she had neither aspired nor attained.

"Poor old mother!" her girls called her; her tall, robust daughters, whose good looks had come to them from their father's side of the family; whose tolerant, careless treatment of their mother had been due rather to a total lack of imagination and thought, than to any ingrained defect of disposition.

Character and circumstances had combined to make Mrs. Martin a submissive soul; she accepted her lot with a resignation worthy of some greater cause, she took the crumbs of affection thrown to her with a gratitude out of all proportion to the gift; she spoke of her daughters as "the dearest, best girls any mother could wish to have," and none of her family had ever had time to observe how, as the years went by, the patient lines in her face deepened, and what a wistfulness crept into her faded eyes.

The Reverend Septimus Martin and his daughters were exceedingly busy with affairs of the parish, political affairs, and work of all descriptions (work written with a capital W). They were seldom or never able to take Mrs. Martin into their calculations, or to consider either what she did or what she thought.

But then, she was such a very ordinary woman, as commonplace in word and thought as in face; so ordinary indeed that, until she died, nobody ever took her into account at all; and then, because the majesty of Death cannot be ignored or set aside, Mrs. Martin, dead, attained to that

importance which, living, had never been hers.

On the morning of her death her husband, the Reverend Septimus, who for more years than he could count had regarded his wife much as he regarded his study table—as a useful part of his household goods, which was never likely to wear out, and was as much a part of everyday-life as the air he breathed—stood looking down at the dead face with a bewildered expression on his own.

Maria dead? The thought was an outrage, an impossibility!

There was something almost—almost—ludicrous in the idea that the quiet form on the bed could be *Maria*—his wife! It seemed impossible that Death and Maria could have any connection with one another. Dear Maria had been so—so ordinary, so commonplace; it was difficult to feel that anything so majestic and remote as Death could have touched even her.

The Reverend Septimus had preached many beautiful and soul-stirring sermons upon the Valley of the Shadow, but in his own mind the personality of those whom he had imagined passing through that valley had always been strong, heroic, great; they were not mere ordinary, everyday folk like "poor Maria."

And yet, although she had passed through that valley, un comforted by word or prayer of his—passed along it in the silence of the night, alone—upon her lips there actually hovered a smile. Her husband glanced round her room at the top of the house, a room which she had chosen for herself when the Reverend Septimus had decided to occupy a small room adjoining his study.

Her room was very like herself, very ordinary, very tidy, very unobtrusive. There were no superfluous fripperies about

it, none of those small trifles which are usually seen in a woman's room:

Her clothes, folded neatly, as he remembered she invariably folded them at night, lay on a chair at the foot of her bed; her pale, faded dressing-gown hung on the foot-rail of the bed itself, its limp folds brought to the Reverend Septimus a faint reminiscent pang. It recalled the everyday, humdrum Maria, so different a Maria from the woman who lay quietly there on the pillow, her still face upturned to the morning sunlight, a strange smile hovering over her lips.

When, presently, her daughters came into the room, their faces startled out of their usual cheerful serenity, even their dulled senses were caught and held by that mysterious smile.

"She looks—so happy!" Beatrice, the youngest girl, whispered, an unaccustomed feeling of awe knocking at her heart: "Happier than she ever looked when—before——"

The other two girls said nothing. To them, as to their father, it seemed impossible that their mother—their quiet, ordinary mother—could be dead; that she could really be lying there with the strange smile on her face, instead of sitting at the head of the breakfast-table, pouring out coffee, and reading occasional extracts from her letters, when a pause in the conversation allowed her gentle voice to be heard.

"Poor old mother!" had been so natural, so inevitable a figure in the house, had played so constant, if so insignificant a part in their lives, that incredulity, rather than acute grief, was the prevailing sensation in the hearts of her daughters.

Demonstrativeness had always been contrary to their creed, and they had never shown any outward signs of affection towards their mother. The hasty bestowal of perfunctory kisses morning and evening seemed to them sufficient fulfilment of their duties in this respect. That their mother might, by a remote chance, ever hunger for more love or tenderness from them, never entered their unimaginative minds.

"Poor old mother!" They pleased to fancy that time had dulled her feelings, if indeed she had ever felt very deeply, of which they had considerable doubt; they would have been mildly amused if anyone had suggested that Mrs. Martin knew, or had any capacity for knowing, the finer shades of sentiment.

That their mother had taken the whole

of her life, wifehood and motherhood included, in a perfectly matter-of-fact and commonplace way, was their fixed, if unexpressed conviction; they were sure that romance, and the highest happiness, had passed her by, that her nature had been incapable of understanding or attaining to them. Poor old mother!

It was still with that odd sense of bewilderment and confusion that the Reverend Septimus and his three daughters stood beside the open grave into which Mrs. Martin was laid for her last, long sleep: Each one of the four had a confused feeling that it was all a dream, a queer, impossible dream, and that when they went home again from the churchyard they would find "mother" seated in her usual chair beside the window, the usual question on her lips:

"Well, my dears—now tell me all about it—and who was there?"

To the outsider, Mrs. Martin had always appeared to be a nonentity in her own house; nobody in the Vicarage had ever seemed to ask for her counsel, or to need her in any single particular. But when the small funeral-party came back from the churchyard, across the garden, and past the open drawing-room window, the room looked strangely blank and empty; the silence in it was like something tangible—something that could be handled and felt. Yet beside the window there was only an empty chair, containing a flat and faded cushion, and before it an equally faded and flat footstool.

On the table by the chair stood the battered old desk, which Mrs. Martin had always used, and her work-basket, in which lay a half-darned sock of her husband. On the evening before she had passed through the Valley of the Shadow alone, she had been mending that sock, sitting silently in her arm-chair, whilst the girls and their father chatted briskly of all the work and interests in which she had no part. Poor old mother!

The girls declared she did not care for politics, therefore they never discussed with her the affairs of the nation; in the parish she was interested only in the older women and the babies, so said her daughters; they ignored her, therefore, when they talked of boys' and girls' clubs, of men's meetings, and bands of hope. Poor old mother!

Her appreciation of the newest literature, the latest ideas of every sort and kind, was supposed to be hopelessly lacking;

Hence she still remained a listener only when her husband and daughters discussed the last novel, or talked over the most up-to-date discoveries of the Higher Criticism:

To her family it was a matter of total indifference whether "poor old mother" believed or disbelieved in the Higher Criticism; with a shrug of the shoulders they recognised that, in her simplicity and ignorance, she actually had faith in old stories that had long ago been relegated to the domain of fable, and simple faith was a little at a discount in the Martin household.

Yet its mistress had gone down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, in the night-time and alone, and she had come out of the Valley on the further side with a smile of mysterious triumph on her face!

On the day following the funeral the three girls prepared to look through their dead mother's things, and to sort and give away her clothing. They were pre-eminently practical, and, as Marion said (Marion was the eldest of the three):

"We have no right to let the dead hinder our work for the living. We must waste no time in being miserable; we had better get all the sorting done as quickly as possible."

A great deal of this speech was merely spoken for the sake of saying something, because neither the Reverend Septimus nor his daughters were wasting any of their infinitely precious moments in mourning their dead. After the funeral they had turned back with distinct relief to the daily routine of their lives, and the time to be given to looking over Mrs. Martin's things would merely be an interlude in one of their well-filled days.

The simple black gowns to which the dead woman had given much thought and care, were taken down from their places in her cupboard and laid in separate bundles, to be hereafter labeled with the names of the most deserving women in the parish.

Her everyday cloak and the Sunday mantle, which had been bought in London, and had seemed so magnificent to Mrs. Martin's simple soul, these were apportioned to two estimable widows in the almshouses. And none of the girls remembered the innocent joy and pride with which that best mantle had been displayed to them when it arrived from London, nor the good-humoured raillery with which they had laughed at their mother for her harmless vanity.

"Poor old mother!" Beatrice had said; "you are as pleased with your antiquated mantle, as if it were a confection from Worth."

And then the mantle had been hung in its cupboard, and not one of Mrs. Martin's daughters noticed when she put it on for the first time; not one of them had seen the wistful pleasure in her eyes, not one of them had noticed how the pleasure faded when she saw that the new mantle made no impression—no impression at all.

And now the cherished garment, which had been such a joy and pride to its wearer, was relegated to Widow Brown in the almshouses, and for Widow Brown was also set aside Mrs. Martin's best bonnet, which had been planned with such thought and care, and after so many visits to the village milliner.

The girls were as methodical as they were practical, hence the sorting and distributing of their mother's limited wardrobe did not take long, and when all the bundles were tied up and ready to be taken to their various destinations, Marion turned towards a little chest of drawers beside the bed.

"We had better go through these drawers next," she said; "the top one is locked. Ask father for the key, Beatrice, it must be the one that was on mother's watch-chain."

The Reverend Septimus was ostensibly writing in his study, but his youngest daughter found him seated at his table, his pen poised in his hand, his eyes fixed on the bed of rose-coloured larkspurs on the lawn.

Maria had planted those larkspurs, and had talked a great deal about them: Poor dear Maria, the garden had been a real pleasure to her; in fact she had sometimes been almost—almost tiresome about her favourite flowers; poor Maria was—

He started when the door opened. Maria had occasionally looked into his study in the morning, but he had never been pleased to see her. He had always told himself that she came at the most inopportune moment to ask for money for the books, or to talk over some trifling matter. But then no moment selected by his wife for the last fifteen years and more had ever been opportune from the point of view of the Reverend Septimus; he had never failed to greet her with the same air of patient annoyance, the same exasperatingly resigned expression, the same words:

"Well, my dear, what can I do for you now?"

The remembrance of this floated confusedly through his mind, as Beatrice came to his side, and spoke in the brisk, decided voice that was the very antipodes of her mother's deprecating accents.

"Please, father, can I have the key off mother's watch-chain?" she said; "the top drawer by her bed is locked."

The Vicar had put the chain away in his desk, pending the dividing of the dead woman's jewelery amongst her daughters; he drew it out and unfastened the small key hanging amongst a little set of charms.

"The larkspurs are at their best," he said irreverently; "your mother was sure they would be in full bloom this week."

"Poor old mother!" came the quick reply, because her thoughts had flown back to Mrs. Martin's prolonged conversation about the rosy flowers, and for the moment the girl had forgotten that her mother was dead. "Poor old mother, how she ~~leaves~~—"

The sentence snapped off suddenly; Beatrice's face flushed, her eyes left the garden and the larkspur bed, and came back to her father's face.

"I—I—forgot!" she stammered.

Then she turned from the room, the key in her hand, and flew upstairs again, to find her sisters clearing out the unlocked drawers by the bedside.

There were neat piles of pamphlets, carefully docketed bills, a few of their father's sermons, and one or two tracts. All these the girls set aside for future consideration, and next Marion opened the drawer of which Beatrice had brought them the key. She was so silent after she had opened it, that the other two craned forward to see what it contained; and Dora, the second girl, exclaimed impatiently:

"What are you waiting for, Marion? Are there some more pamphlets—or what?"

"No," Marion answered, and there was a curious tremor in her voice; "it—*isn't* pamphlets—it—*it is this!*"

Out of the drawer she lifted a square worsted mat, a mat that one of them had made long ago in childhood's days—long ago; long before they had begun to think of their mother as ordinary and commonplace, before they had called her "poor old

mother!" and on the mat lay a pathetic assortment of small treasures, such things as neither her husband nor daughters had ever dreamt that Mrs. Martin kept, or cared for.

An ordinary rubber tobacco pouch, very much the worse for wear, which the Reverend Septimus had carried until it was quite useless. A tiny pair of baby socks, worn thin by the small feet that had pattered upon her knee; a battered old doll which had been Beatrice's favourite toy; the book out of which each in turn had learnt her childish lessons; and lying on the top of these a scarcely withered rose.

The girls' eyes met, and Beatrice spoke:

"That rose," she said, and her voice quivered, "that rose—can only have been here a little while. It—"

From round the rose's stalk a little slip of paper fell to the ground. Marion stooped to pick it up, but as she read what was written upon it, the words all ran together in a mist before her eyes, and there was a sob in her voice when she handed it to Dora.

"Look!" she said.

The handwriting was faint; one would have said the writer of those lines must have been very tired; perhaps the Shadow of the dark Valley was already creeping about her, when her fingers picked up the pen.

"Beatrice's rose. My darling gave it me."

These were the faintly-written words, and as she read them Beatrice gave a little cry:

"I had the rose in my dress," she faltered, "that night—the night before—before, and I took it out and put it in mother's lap; and she—and she—"

The girl's voice broke, a sob rose in her throat; the larkspurs in the garden grew dim before her eyes.

"And we can never tell her now!" she exclaimed suddenly and incoherently; "we can never tell her, or show her that—we did care. She kept those little things of ours, and I believe she looked at them every night; and—we—we didn't know, or care—or anything! If only we could tell her!"

Ah! poor old mother!

Thrilling Escapes.

Who has not experienced a thrill when reading a vivid account of an escape from wild beasts, from burning houses, from floods, from prisons, from savages, from sinking ships, and other unpleasant situations too numerous to mention? In this feature the works of the greatest writers of the past are made to yield their toll of such exciting happenings. Each extract forms a miniature story, and is perfectly intelligible without reference to the book from which it is taken.

THE ESCAPE FROM POLYPHEMUS, THE CYCLOPS.

From "The Odyssey" of Homer.

"The Odyssey" of Homer is one of the two most ancient Greek poems on the subject of the Trojan War. Homer wove the story from the mass of legends and traditions at his command with masterly skill, and chose for his hero Odysseus (Ulysses), King of Ithaca, an island on the western coast of Greece.

The object of the Trojan war was to win back Helen, the wife of Menelaus, from Paris, the son of Priam, King of Troy. When Troy was taken, in the tenth year of the war, the perilous homeward voyage of Odysseus (Ulysses) began, and "The Odyssey" relates his extraordinary adventures and deeds of daring.

The following extract deals with his visit to the island of the Cyclopes, a race of one-eyed giants. He and his companions had entered the cave of Polyphemus, who killed and ate two of the men. Odysseus (Ulysses) casts about for a means of escape—the cave entrance was closed with a stone impossible for any but a Cyclops to move.

NOW, when early dawn shone forth, the rosy-fingered, again he kindled the fire and milked his goodly flocks, all orderly, and beneath each ewe set her lamb. Anon, when he had done all his work busily, again he seized yet another two men and made ready his midday meal.

And after the meal lightly he moved away the great door-stone, and drove his fat flocks forth from the cave, and afterwards he set it in his place again, as one might set the lid on a quiver. Then, with a loud whoop, the Cyclops turned his fat flocks towards the hills; but I was left devising evil in the deep of my heart, if in any wise I might avenge me, and Athene grant me renown.

And this was the counsel that showed best in my sight. There lay by a sheep-fold a great club of the Cyclops, a club of olive wood, yet green, which he had cut to carry with him when it should be seasoned. Now, when we saw it we likened it in size to the mast of a black ship of twenty oars, a wide merchant vessel that traverses the

great sea gulf, so huge it was to view in bulk and length.

I stood thereby and cut off from it a portion as it were a fathom's length, and set it by my fellows, and bade them fine it down, and they made it even, while I stood by and sharpened it to a point, and straightway I took it and hardened it in the bright fire. Then I laid it well away, and hid it: : : And I bade my company cast lots among them which of them should risk the adventure with me, and lift the bar and turn it about in his eye, when sweet sleep came upon him. And the lot fell upon those four whom I myself would have been fain to choose, and I appointed myself to be the fifth among them.

In the evening he came shepherding his flocks of goodly fleece, and presently he drove his fat flocks into the cave each and all, nor left he any without in the deep courtyard, whether through some foreboding or perchance that the god so bade him do. Thereafter he lifted the huge door-stone and set it in the mouth of the cave, and, sitting down, he milked the ewes

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and bleating goats, all orderly, and beneath each ewe he placed her young.

Now, when he had done all his work busily, he seized yet other two and made ready his supper. Then I stood by the Cyclops and spake to him, holding in my hands an ivy bowl of the dark wine.

"Cyclops, take and drink wine after thy feast of man's meat, that thou mayest know what manner of drink this was that our ship held. And, lo! I was bringing it thee as a drink offering, if haply thou mayest take pity and send me on my way home, but thy mad rage is past all sufferance: O hard of heart, how may another of the many men there be come ever to thee again, seeing that thy deeds have been lawless?"

So I spake, and he took the cup and drank it off, and found great delight in drinking the sweet draught, and asked me for it yet a second time.

"Give it me again of thy grace, and tell me thy name straightway, that I may give thee a stranger's gift, wherein thou mayest be glad. Yea, for the Earth, the grain-giver, bears for the Cyclopes the mighty clusters of the juice of the grape, and the rain of Zeus gives them increase, but this is a rill of very nectar and ambrosia."

So he spake, and again I handed him the dark wine.

Thrice I bare and gave it him, and thrice in his folly he drank it to the lees. Now, when the wine had got about the wits of the Cyclops, then did I speak to him with soft words:

"Cyclops, thou askest me my renowned name, and I will declare it unto thee, and do thou grant me a stranger's gift, as thou didst promise. Noman is my name, and Noman they call me, my father and my mother and all my fellows."

So I spake, and straightway he answered me out of his pitiless heart:

"Noman will I eat last in the number of his fellows, and the others before him; that shall be thy gift."

Therefore he sank backwards and fell with face upturned, and there he lay with his great neck bent around, and sleep, that conquers all men, overcame him. : : : Then I thrust in that stake under the deep ashes, until it should grow hot, and I spake to my companions comfortable words, lest any should hang back from me in fear.

But when that bar of olive wood was just about to catch fire in the flame, green though it was, and began to glow terribly,

even then I came nigh, and drew it from the coals, and my fellows gathered about me, and some god breathed great courage into us. For their part they seized the bar of olive wood, that was sharpened at the point, and thrust it into his eye, while I from my place aloft turned it about, as when a man bores a ship's beam with a drill while his fellows below spin it with a strap, which they hold at either end, and the auger runs round continually. Even so did we seize the fiery-pointed brand and whirled it round in his eye, and the blood flowed about the heated bar.

And the breath of the flame singed his eyelids and brows all about, as the ball of the eye burnt away, and the roots thereof crackled in the flame. And as when a smith dips an axe or adze in chill water with a great hissing, when he would temper it—for hereby anon comes the strength of iron—even so did his eye hiss round the stake of olive.

And he raised a great and terrible cry, that the rock rang around, and we fled away in fear, while he plucked forth from his eye the brand bedabbled in much blood. Then maddened with pain he cast it from him with his hands, and called with a loud voice on the Cyclopes, who dwelt about him in the caves along the windy heights. And they heard the cry and flocked together from every side, and gathering round the cave, asked him what ailed him.

"What hath so distressed thee, Polyphemus, that thou criest thus aloud through the immortal night, and makest us sleepless? Surely no mortal driveth off thy flocks against thy will; surely none slayest thyself by force or craft?"

And the strong Polyphemus spake to them again from out the cave: "My friends, Noman is slaying me by guile, nor at all by force."

And they answered and spake winged words: "If, then, no man is violently handling thee in thy solitude, it can in no wise be that thou shouldest escape the sickness sent by mighty Zeus. Nay, pray thou to thy father, the lord Poseidon."

On this wise they spake and departed; and my heart within me laughed to see how my name and cunning counsel had beguiled them. But the Cyclops, groaning and travailling in pain, groped with his hands, and lifted away the stone from the door of the cave, and himself sat in the entry, with arms outstretched to catch, if he might, anyone that was going forth

with his sheep, so witless, methinks, did he hope to find me:

But I advised me how all might be for the very best, if perchance I might find a way of escape from death for my companions and myself, and I wove all manner of craft and counsel, as a man will for his life, seeing that great mischief was nigh: And this was the counsel that showed best in my sight.

The rams of the flock were well nurtured and thick of fleece, great and goodly, with wool dark as the violet: Quietly I lashed them together with twisted withies, whereon the Cyclops slept, that lawless monster. Three together I took; now the middle one of the three would bear each a man, but the other twain went on either side, saving my fellows.

Thus every three sheep bare their man: But as for me, I laid hold of the back of a young ram who was far the best and the goodliest of all the flock, and curled beneath his shaggy belly there I lay, and so clung face upward, grasping the wondrous fleece with a steadfast heart: So for that time making moan we waited the bright dawn.

So soon as early dawn shone forth, the rosy-fingered, then did the rams of the flock hasten forth to pasture, but the ewes bleated unmilked about the pens: : : : Then their lord, sore-stricken with pain, felt along the backs of all the sheep as they stood up before him, and guessed not in his folly how that my men were bound beneath the breasts of his thick-fleeced flocks: Last of all the sheep came forth the ram, cumbered with his wool, and the weight of me and my cunning. And the strong Polyphemus laid his hands on him and spake to him, saying:

"Dear ram, wherefore, I pray thee, art thou the last of all the flocks to go forth from the cave, who of old wast not wont to lag behind the sheep, but wert ever the foremost to pluck the tender blossom of the pasture, faring with long strides, and wert still the first to come to the streams of the rivers, and first didst long to return to the homestead in the evening. But now art thou the very last.

"Surely thou art sorrowing for the eye of thy lord, which an evil man blinded with his accursed fellows, when he had subdued my wits with wine, even Noman, whom I say hath not yet escaped destruction. Ah, if thou couldst feel as I, and be endued with speech, to tell me where he shifts about to shun my wrath; then should he be

smitten, and his brains be dashed against the floor here and there about the cave, and my heart be lightened of the sorrows which Noman, nothing worth, hath brought me!"

Therewith he sent the ram forth from him, and when we had gone but a little way from the cave and from the yard, first I loosed myself from under the ram and then I set my fellows free. And swiftly we drove on those stiff-shanked sheep, so rich in fat, and often turned to look about, till we came to the ship.

And a glad sight to our fellows were we that had fled from death, but the others they would have bemoaned with tears; howbeit I suffered it not, but with frowning brows forbade each man to weep. Rather I bade them to cast on board the many sheep with goodly fleece, and to sail over the salt sea water.

So they embarked forthwith, and sat upon the benches, and sitting orderly smote the grey sea water with their oars. But when I had not gone so far, but that a man's shout might be heard, then I spoke unto the Cyclops, taunting him:

"Cyclops, so thou wert not to eat the company of a weakling by main might in thy hollow cave! Thine evil deeds were very sure to find thee out, thou cruel man, who hadst no shame to eat thy guests within thy gates, wherefore Zeus hath required thee, and the other gods."

So I spake, and he was mightily angered at heart, and he brake off the peak of a great hill and threw it at us, and it fell in front of the dark-prowed ship. And the sea heaved beneath the fall of the rock, and the backward flow of the wave bare the ship quickly to the dry land, with the wash from the deep sea, and drove it to the shore.

Then I caught up a long pole in my hands, and thrust the ship from off the land, and roused my company, and with a motion of the head bade them dash in with their oars, that so we might escape our evil plight. So they bent to their oars and rowed on. But when we had now made twice the distance over the brine, I would fain have spoken to the Cyclops, but my company stayed me on every side with soft words, saying:

"Foolhardy that thou art, why wouldst thou rouse a wild man to wrath, who even now hath cast so mighty a throw towards the deep and brought our ship back to land; yea, and we thought that we had

perished even there? If he had heard any of us utter sound or speech he would have crushed our heads and our ship timbers with a cast of a rugged stone, so mightily he hurls."

So spake they, but they prevailed not on my lordly spirit, and I answered him again from out an angry heart:

"Cyclops, if any one of mortal men shall ask thee of the unsightly blinding of thine eye, say that it was Odysseus that blinded it, the waster of cities, son of Laertes, whose dwelling is in Ithaca."

So I spake, and with a moan he answered me, saying:

"Lo, now, in very truth the ancient oracles have come upon me. There lived here a soothsayer, a noble man and a mighty, Telemus, son of Eurymus, who surpassed all men in soothsaying, and waxed old as a seer among the Cyclopes. He told

me that all these things should come to pass in the after time, even that I should lose my eyesight at the hand of Odysseus: But I ever looked for some tall and goodly man to come hither, clad in great might, but behold now, one that is a dwarf, a man of no worth and a weakling, hath blinded me of my eye after subduing me with wine : . . ."

And once again he lifted a stone, far greater than the first, and with one swing he hurled it, and he put forth a measureless strength, and cast it but a little space behind the dark-prowed ship, and all but struck the end of the rudder. And the sea heaved beneath the fall of the rock, but the wave bare on the ship and drave it to the further shore. : : :

Thence we sailed onward, stricken at heart yet glad as men saved from death, albeit we had lost our dear companions.

THE ESCAPE OF THE DUC DE BEAUFORT.

From "Twenty Years After," by ALEXANDRE DUMAS

The sensational escape of the Duc de Beaufort from captivity is the subject of the following extract from Dumas' famous sequel to "The Three Musketeers." It forms one of the most exciting episodes of the book, and is told with all Dumas' literary fire and skill.

The Duc de Beaufort is a political prisoner in the donjon of Vincennes under the zealous care of La Ramée, the sub-governor. He is attended by Grimaud, the faithful servant of his friends Athos, Porthos and Aramis, the Three Musketeers. Grimaud is disguised as a gaoler, and has been introduced by them into the prison to aid him to escape.

How the Duc manages to hoodwink La Ramée, and, by the help of Grimaud, to attain his freedom, is told as follows:—

THE game at tennis, which, upon a sign from Grimaud, Monsieur de Beaufort had consented to play, began in the afternoon. The Duke was in full force, and beat La Ramée completely.

Four of the guards, who were constantly near the prisoner, assisted in picking up the tennis balls. When the game was over, the Duke, laughing at La Ramée for his bad play, offered these men two louis-d'or to go and drink his health with their four other comrades.

The guards asked permission of La Ramée, who gave it to them, but not till the evening, however; until then he had business, and the prisoner was not to be left alone.

Six o'clock came, and, though they were not to sit down to table until seven o'clock, dinner was ready, and served up. Upon

a side-board appeared a colossal pie with the Duke's arms on it, and, seemingly, cooked to a turn, so far as one could judge by the golden colour which illumined the crust.

The rest of the dinner was to come.

Everyone was impatient; La Ramée to sit down to table—the guards to go and drink—the Duke to escape.

Grimaud alone was calm as ever. One might have fancied that Athos had educated him with a forethought of this great event.

There were moments when, looking at Grimaud, the Duke asked himself if he were not dreaming, and if that marble figure were really at his service, and would become animate when the moment arrived for action.

La Ramée sent away the guards, desiring

them to drink the Duke's health, and, as soon as they were gone, he shut all the doors, put the keys in his pocket, and showed the table to the Duke with an air which meant :

"Whenever my lord pleases."

The Duke looked at Grimaud—Grimaud looked at the clock ; it was hardly a quarter-past six. The escape was fixed to take place at seven o'clock. There were, therefore, three-quarters of an hour to wait.

The Duke, in order to delay a quarter of an hour, pretended to be reading something that interested him, and said he wished they would allow him to finish his chapter. La Ramée went up to him and looked over his shoulder to see what book it was that had so singular an influence over the prisoner as to make him put off taking his dinner.

It was Cæsar's "Commentaries," which La Ramée had lent him, contrary to the orders of the governor ; and La Ramée resolved never again to disobey those injunctions.

Meantime he uncorked the bottles, and went to smell if the pie were good.

At half-past six the Duke arose, and said very gravely :

"Certainly, Cæsar was the greatest man of ancient times."

"You think so, my lord ?" answered La Ramée.

"Yes."

"Well, as for me, I prefer Hannibal."

"And why, pray, Master La Ramée ?" asked the Duke.

"Because he left no 'Commentaries,'" replied La Ramée, with his coarse laugh.

The Duke offered no reply, but, sitting down to the table, made a sign that La Ramée should also seat himself opposite to him. There is nothing so expressive as the face of an epicure who finds himself before a well-spread table ; so La Ramée, when receiving his plate of soup from Grimaud, presented a type of bliss.

The Duke smiled.

"Zounds !" he said ; "I don't suppose there is a happier man at this moment in the kingdom than you are ?"

"You are right, my lord duke," answered the officer ; "I don't know a pleasanter sight than a well-covered table ; and when, added to that, he who does the honours is the grandson of Henry IV., you will, my lord duke, easily comprehend that the honour one receives doubles the pleasure one enjoys."

The Duke bowed in his turn, and an imperceptible smile appeared on the face of Grimaud, who kept behind La Ramée.

"My dear La Ramée," said the Duke, "you're the only man who can turn a compliment as you do."

"No, my lord duke," replied La Ramée. in the fulness of his heart, "I say what I think—there is no compliment in what I say to you."

"Then you are attached to me ?" asked the Duke.

"To own the truth, I should be insoluble if you were to leave Vincennes."

"A droll way of showing your affliction." The Duke meant to say "affection."

"But, my lord," returned La Ramée, "what would you do if you got out ? Every folly you committed would embroil you with the Court, and they would put you into the Bastille, instead of Vincennes. Now, Monsieur de Chavigny is not amiable, I allow ; but Monsieur du Tremblay is much worse."

"Indeed," exclaimed the Duke, who from time to time looked at the clock, the fingers of which seemed to move with a sickening slowness ; "but what could you expect from a brother of a Capuchin monk, brought up in the school of Cardinal Richelieu ?"

"Ah, my lord, it is a great happiness that the queen, who always wished you well, had a fancy to send you here, where there's a promenade, and a tennis court, good air, and a good table."

"In short," answered the Duke, "if I comprehend you, La Ramée, I am ungrateful for ever having thought of leaving this place ?"

"Oh, my lord duke, 'tis the height of ingratitude ; but your highness has never seriously thought of it ?"

"Yes," returned the Duke, "I must confess I do sometimes think of it."

"Still by one of your forty methods, your highness ?"

"Yes, yes, indeed."

"My lord," said La Ramée, "now we are quite at our ease, and enjoying ourselves, pray tell me one of those forty ways invented by your highness."

"Willingly," answered the Duke ; "give me the pie."

"I am listening," said La Ramée, leaning back in his arm-chair, and raising his glass of Madeira to his lips, and winking his eye that he might see the sun through the rich liquid that he was about to taste.

The Duke glanced at the clock: In ten minutes it would strike the seven:

Grimaud placed the pie before the Duke, who took a knife with a silver blade to raise the upper crust; but La Ramée, who was afraid of any harm happening to this fine work of art, passed his knife, which had an iron blade, to the Duke.

"Thank you, La Ramée," said the prisoner.

"Well, my lord, this famous invention of yours?"

"Must I tell you," replied the Duke, "on what I most reckon, and what I determine to try first?"

"Yes, that one, my lord."

"Well, I should hope, in the first instance, to have as a keeper an honest fellow, like you."

"And you have one, my lord—well?"

"Having then a keeper like La Ramée, I should try also to have introduced to me by some friend a man who would be devoted to me, and who would assist me in my flight."

"Come, come," said La Ramée, "not a bad idea."

"Isn't it? For instance, the former serving-man of some brave gentleman, an enemy himself to Mazarin, as every gentleman ought to be."

"Hush—don't let us talk of politics, my lord."

"Then my keeper will begin to trust this man, and to depend upon him; and then I shall have news from those without the prison walls."

"Ah, yes, but how can the news be brought to you?"

"Nothing easier—in a game of tennis: I send a ball into the moat; a man is there who picks it up; the ball contains a letter."

"The devil it does! The devil it does!" said La Ramée, scratching his head; "you are wrong to tell me that, my lord. I shall watch the men who pick up balls."

The Duke smiled.

"But," resumed La Ramée, "that is only one way of corresponding."

"'Tis a good one, it seems to me."

"But not a sure one."

"Pardon me. For instance, I say to my friends—be on a certain day, on a certain hour, at the other side of the moat, with two horses."

"Well, what then?"—La Ramée began to be uneasy—"unless the horses have wings to mount up to the ramparts and to come and fetch you."

"That's not needed. I have," replied the Duke, "a way of descending from the ramparts."

"What?"

"A ladder of ropes."

"Yes—but," answered La Ramée, trying to laugh, "a ladder of ropes can't be sent round a ball, like a letter."

"No; but it can come in another way—in a pie, for instance," replied the Duke: "The guard's away. Grimaud is here alone; and Grimaud is the man whom a friend has sent to second me in everything. The moment for my escape is fixed—seven o'clock. Well—at a few minutes to seven—"

"At a few minutes to seven?" cried La Ramée, the cold sweat on his brow.

"At a few minutes to seven," returned the Duke (suiting the action to the words), "I raise the crust of the pie. I find in it two poignards, a ladder of ropes, and a gag: I point one of the poignards at La Ramée's breast, and I say to him: 'My friend, I am sorry for it; but if thou stirrest, if thou utterest a cry, thou art a dead man.'"

The Duke, in pronouncing these words, suited, as we have said before, the action to the words. He was standing near the officer, and he directed the point of the poignard in such a manner, close to La Ramée's heart, that there could be no doubt in the mind of that individual as to his determination.

Meanwhile, Grimaud, still mute as ever, drew from the pie the other sword, the rope ladder, and the gag.

La Ramée followed all these objects with his eyes; his alarm every moment increasing.

"Oh, my lord!" he cried, with an expression of stupefaction on his face; "you haven't the heart to kill me?"

"No; not if thou dost not oppose my flight."

"But, my lord, if I let you escape, I am a ruined man."

"I shall compensate thee for the loss of thy place."

"You are determined to leave the *château*?"

"By Heaven and earth! This evening I shall be free."

"And if I defend myself, or call, or cry out?"

"I shall kill thee; on the honour of a gentleman, I shall."

At this moment the clock struck.

"Seven o'clock," said Grimaud, who had not spoken a word.

La Ramée made one movement, in order to satisfy his conscience. The Duke frowned; the officer felt the point of the poignard, which, having penetrated through his clothes, was close to his heart.

"Let us dispatch," said the Duke

"My lord—one last favour."

"What? Speak—make haste."

"Bind my arms, my lord, fast."

"Why bind thee?"

"That I may not be considered as your accomplice."

"Your hands?" asked Grimaud.

"Not before me, behind me."

"But with what?" asked the Duke:

"With your belt, my lord," replied La Ramée.

The Duke undid his belt and gave it to Grimaud, who tied La Ramée in such a way as to satisfy him:

"Your feet also," said Grimaud.

La Ramée stretched out his legs, Grimaud took a napkin, tore it into strips, and tied La Ramée's feet together.

"Now, my lord," said the poor man, "let me have the *poire d'angoisse*. I ask for it; without it I should be tried in a court of justice because I did not cry out. Thrust it into my mouth, my lord, thrust it in."

Grimaud prepared to comply with this request, when the officer made a sign as if he had something to say.

"Speak," said the Duke.

"Now, my lord, do not forget, if any harm happens to me, on your account, that I have a wife and four children."

"Rest assured—put the gag in, Grimaud."

In a second La Ramée was gagged, and laid prostrate. Two or three of the chairs were thrown down, as if there had been a struggle. Grimaud then took from the pocket of the officer all the keys it contained, and first opened the door of the room in which they were, then shut it, and double-locked it, and both he and the Duke proceeded rapidly down the gallery, which led to the little inclosure. At last they reached the tennis-court. It was completely deserted. No sentinels; no one at the windows:

The Duke ran on to the rampart, and perceived, on the other side of the ditch, three cavaliers with two riding horses. The Duke exchanged a signal with them. It was well for him that they were there.

Grimaud meantime undid the means of escape.

This was not, however, a rope-ladder, but a ball of silk cord, with a narrow board, which was to pass between the legs, and to unwind itself by the weight of the person who sat astride upon the board.

"Go!" said the Duke.

"The first, my lord?" inquired Grimaud:

"Certainly. If I am caught, I risk nothing but being taken back to prison. If they catch thee, thou wilt be hanged."

"True," replied Grimaud.

And instantly Grimaud, sitting upon the board, as if on horseback, commenced his perilous descent:

The Duke followed him with his eyes with involuntary terror. He had gone down about three-quarters of the length of the wall, when the cord broke. Grimaud fell—precipitated into the moat.

The Duke uttered a cry, but Grimaud did not give a single moan. He must have been dreadfully hurt, for he did not stir from the place where he fell.

Immediately one of the men who were waiting slipped down into the moat, tied under Grimaud's shoulders the end of a cord, and the other two, who held the other end, drew Grimaud to them.

"Descend, my lord," said the man in the moat. "There are only fifteen feet more from the top down here, and the grass is soft."

The Duke had already begun to descend: His task was the more difficult, as there was no board to support him. He was obliged to let himself down by his hands, and from a height of fifty feet. But, as we have said, he was active, strong, and full of presence of mind. In less than five minutes he arrived at the end of the cord. He was then only fifteen feet from the ground, as the gentleman below had told him. He let go the rope, and fell upon his feet, without receiving any injury.

He instantly began to climb up the slope of the moat, on the top of which he met De Rochefort. The other two gentlemen were unknown to him: Grimaud, in a swoon, was tied on to a horse.

"Gentlemen," said the Duke, "I shall thank you later; now we have not a moment to lose. On, then, on, those who love me, follow me."

And he jumped on his horse, and set off at full gallop, drawing in the fresh air, and crying out, with an expression of face which it would be impossible to describe:

"Free! Free! Free!"

The Fate of the "Kittiewake."

* * * * * By GERALD HALFORD.

One of the most extraordinary stories of the sea ever written.

THE MISSING VESSEL.

IT was a fine morning in May, with bright sunshine and a fresh easterly breeze, and the men on the *Kittiewake* sang cheerily as they weighed anchor before leaving Normsby Harbour for the fishing in the Northern seas. They were in good spirits, for visions of phenomenal hauls of fish and corresponding profits floated before their eyes.

Besides the crew there were two gentlemen on board. The elder was a tall, stern-faced man, whose every feature suggested to a discerning eye the legal profession. The younger, from the striking resemblance between them, was evidently his son. They were taking leave of each other, for the son was, by his doctor's orders, to accompany the smack on her fishing trip.

"Well, good-bye, George," said the father: "I hope you'll have a good time, and come home strong and well."

"Good-bye, father!" the son answered cheerily. "I've no doubt I shall enjoy myself. I rather like roughing it, and the sea always does me good. I shall come back in October fit for any amount of work."

* * * * *

October came and went, and Normsby waited in vain for the return of the *Kittiewake*. The other smacks were all safe in harbour, and the last one in, the *Brothers All*, reported that when they left Faroe the *Kittiewake* was in Strangles Fiord harbour, preparing to follow them next day. Inquiries by telegraph showed that the *Kittiewake* had touched at Peterhead at the end of September. After that her history was an absolute blank.

It was certainly strange: Her crew were known to be sober and steady men. The weather had been beautifully fine and clear, so that there could be no excuse for her running on to a rock or against any floating wreckage, and even if she had done

so her crew ought to have been able without any difficulty to get away in their boat.

For the same reasons it seemed unlikely that they had been run down by a steamer. Neither could she have collided with an iceberg, for she had passed the ice latitude. Altogether the matter remained a mystery. The only thing certain was that the ship had vanished, and all hope of seeing any of her crew again was gradually abandoned.

Mr. Ridley, the lawyer whose son George had sailed on board the *Kittiewake*, came from London to Normsby to make inquiries.

He was assured by the sympathising owner that there could be no doubt that the vessel was lost with all hands. Otherwise they would certainly have heard of her from the first port she touched at. He proposed to go North to make inquiries, but was told that this would be utterly useless.

The following January he received a letter which caused him the utmost amazement. It ran as follows:—

SIR,—

I learn from a paragraph in the papers that among those on board the missing smack *Kittiewake* was your son, George Beddolph Ridley. Now I think it right to let you know that I have in my possession a gold watch bearing on the inside of the case the name George Beddolph Ridley. This watch was left in pawn with me by a common sailor on the 2nd of October last. Should this be your son's watch, and should it afford any clue to his fate, I shall be happy to give you any assistance in my power.

I remain, your obedient servant,
JAMES HOGG.

The letter was dated from the Scotch port of Arbroath, and was in a commercial hand, written on the business paper of James Hogg, jeweler and goldsmith.

Mr. Ridley did not doubt for a minute that the letter was genuine, or that the watch was his son's. He puzzled over the matter till his brain fairly reeled.

His son, he knew, had had the watch with him when he sailed. If the *Kittiewake* had gone down with all hands, how had

the watch come into the sailor's possession? Of course, it *might* have been stolen by some sailor when George had been ashore, but his son had not mentioned the loss in the letter posted at Peterhead—the place where the *Kittiwake* had last been heard of—as he would have been certain to do, and the natural inference was that he still had the watch with him when the smack left that port. Yet a few days later that watch had been pawned by a sailor in Arbroath!

Mr. Ridley began to suspect foul play: He resolved that if there had been any crime committed he would hunt out the criminals and avenge his son, whatever the cost.

His first move was to go to Arbroath next day and interview the pawnbroker. The watch *was* his son's, as he had made sure it would be. He insisted on redeeming it, and to the pawnbroker's protest that such a transaction was illegal, replied that the watch had undoubtedly been stolen, and really belonged to his son.

He then asked about the sailor who had pawned the watch, and the pawnbroker said he could swear to him anywhere—a small man with a hooked nose and a great scar across his face, dressed as a smacksman: He had given the name of John Smith, but that was a matter of no importance: If he had come by the watch dishonestly he would, of course, give an assumed name.

Mr. Ridley then inquired from the proper authorities what smacks had been in the harbour on October 2nd, but was unable to obtain any information. It was certain, however, that no smack had been registered as having anchored in the harbour on that day, and on returning to Normsby he ascertained that the only smack that had arrived in harbour after that date was the *Brothers All*.

It behoved him now to be cautious, for if there *had* been any rascality it was essential to take the rascals unawares.

A crime committed at sea is most difficult to unravel or bring home to the perpetrator. If a whole crew join in any crime or swindle and all stick to the same tale it is obviously impossible to disprove what they say. The only chance is to surprise one of them into making some admission, and then drag the truth out of him.

Mr. Ridley ascertained that there *was* a man belonging to the *Brothers All* answering to the description given by the pawnbroker, and that his name was Harry

Purcell. His suspicion that there had been foul play, and that the whole crew of the *Brothers All* were more or less concerned in it, grew stronger.

Besides Harry Purcell the crew consisted of three brothers named Heckford, two other able seamen, and seven apprentices of varying ages, of whom the youngest, a boy named Arthur Stone, acted as cabin-boy. All the men bore more or less shady characters.

It at once occurred to Mr. Ridley that his best chance lay in getting hold of the boy Arthur Stone. He had inquiries cautiously made concerning him, and found that his mother let apartments. He at once went to the rooms and engaged them under an assumed name.

In the evening he informed Mrs. Stone that he intended to go fishing off a boat next day. Did she know any lad who would care to earn half-a-crown by accompanying him as his assistant? Mrs. Stone at once recommended her son, and with the usual garrulity of her class further informed Mr. Ridley that he had been on a fishing-smack during the Summer:

"I'm afraid you won't find him very lively company, sir," the good dame remarked. "He used to be as cheerful and jolly as—as a skylark. But since he came back from his last trip he's been sort of dazed and moping like—seems as if he was always afeared of something. The men say he fell overboard and was nearly drowned, and that upset his nerves. Now, his father, he was quite different—always laughing and joking. Nothing couldn't put him out. I don't say but what he used to have his glass. We all has our faults. Sometimes he'd come in so as he could hardly stand, and then he'd fall into a chair and throw his cap on the table with a bang, and say to me: 'I may be drunk, Jane, but anyway, I'm jolly!'" And Mrs. Stone giggled.

Here Mr. Ridley managed to cut her short, not being interested in her reminiscences of the defunct Mr. Stone. But he had been greatly interested in her account of her son: He began to feel pretty sure that he was on the right track.

Next morning he started on his fishing expedition with the boy. He found that the mother's description had been quite correct. The boy seemed to be in a state of painful depression and nervousness, as if he had something weighing on his mind.

Mr. Ridley talked to him about his fishing experiences in the North Sea, and seemed to

be greatly interested in the cod-fishing in general.

Then he asked him suddenly and sternly :

"What became of the *Kittiewake*—and her crew—and young Mr. Ridley ? You know you could tell, if you liked, and I'm going to make you tell."

The lawyer was rowing at the time, the boy was in the stern attending to the line. At the lawyer's question he turned round sharply, and as soon as Mr. Ridley saw his face he knew that he was right. Arthur Stone knew.

His face was quite painful to see as he stared at Mr. Ridley in speechless terror, white and trembling. After a long pause he managed with an effort to gasp out : "How should I know ?"

"You *do* know, I see," continued Mr. Ridley. "Now, either you'll tell me everything you know at once, or I shall take you straight off to the police-station and have you locked up till you tell the truth."

This piece of bluff was successful. The boy did not repeat his denial. He sat with his face between his hands, and began to sob.

"I daren't tell you !" he said.

Mr. Ridley looked at him more kindly.

"You need not be afraid," he said. "I can see how it is, of course. There's been some fiendish work going on, and the men forced you to take a hand in it. You have nothing to fear if you'll only tell the truth. The law would never punish a boy for what men forced him to do. If you help to get the guilty parties punished nobody will have anything but praise for you. You can take my word for that. I'm a lawyer, and I know what I'm talking about. You can trust me, can't you ?"

The boy looked in the lawyer's face, and after a few more sobs said :

"I'll tell you all I know, sir."

"What's become of young Mr. Ridley ?" the lawyer asked quickly.

"Drowned," said the boy, with a sob.

Mr. Ridley suppressed a groan. But he was not surprised, for he had not allowed himself to hope for anything different.

"And the crew ?" he asked.

"All drowned."

"How and where did the *Kittiewake* sink, then ?" asked the lawyer.

"She ain't sunk at all. She's in Normsby harbour !" was the boy's startling answer.

Mr. Ridley had often when cross-examining witnesses received sensational answers, but never had any answer so amazed him

as this one. He angrily seized the boy by the shoulder.

"Are you telling me a pack of lies, you young hound ?" he asked furiously.

"I ain't lying !" the boy sobbed. "It's the truth I'm telling you. I'll explain if you'll give me time."

It was some time before the boy could compose himself, and then the lawyer, with professional skill, elicited from him bit by bit his tale—a tale of such cold-blooded cruelty and wickedness as many would think impossible in these days of civilisation.

It is unnecessary to give the story in the boy's words. It will be given here as it was put together from various sources after the trial of the criminals.

* * *

THE BROTHERS HECKFORD.

THE smack *Brothers All* was owned by three brothers named Heckford, men who were known to be good and daring sailors, but of violent and reckless disposition, and given to drink. They had given the boat its name partly in honour of the fact that the owners were all brothers, partly as an indication of the fraternal feeling that was to exist between them and their crew. The crew were men very much of their own stamp, jovial, reckless and quick of temper when sober, pugnacious and quarrelsome when drunk.

James Heckford was the captain, a fine young fellow physically and a born sailor, but reckless, unscrupulous and violent of temper. He was the eldest of the three brothers (they were all under thirty), and, being by nature a leader of men, he exercised undisputed authority on board.

Jack Heckford, the mate, was a pale reflection of his brother, with less daring, less skill as a seaman, and less force of character, but with all his unscrupulousness and passionate temper.

The third brother's name was William: He was not so fine a man physically as his brothers, and was less boisterous, but in intelligence—or that low cunning which passes for intelligence amongst such men—he was considerably their superior. He was known to his friends as Wily Bill, and perhaps that is a sufficient indication of his character.

The *Brothers All* put out to sea the day after the *Kittiewake*. There was no love lost between the two crews. The *Kittiewake* was owned by a tradesman in the

town who was an abstainer and who insisted on all his crew being abstainers also. This in itself was enough to move the angry contempt of the Heckfords, for men who drink cannot bear an abstainer.

Then the Heckfords were proud of being the owners of the ship they sailed on, and lost no chance of taunting the skipper of the *Kittiewake* with his dependent position: The two ships, as they were fitting out, were moored only a few fathoms apart, so that the crews had every opportunity of insulting each other.

"Seen your master to-day?" was a favourite jeer of Jim Heckford to the rival skipper:

The skipper was a middle-aged man, rather short, but thickset and powerfully built. He possessed a very equable temper and nerves of iron, and took all the Heckfords' jeering with unmoved countenance.

"I ain't got no master," he answered coolly.

"Oh! haven't you?" jeered Jim. "I suppose Mr. Blooming Jackson ain't your master? I suppose if that canting, psalm-singing old fraud was to come round here and say: 'Now then, Morley my boy, out you go! You're getting too old, you are. You're blooming well past your work. I want younger men'—I suppose you wouldn't have to go, would you? I suppose you would blooming well tell him to go to blazes, wouldn't you?"

"Mr. Jackson won't do that," the skipper retorted, unmoved. "He knows when he's got a good man."

Jim Heckford laughed derisively.

"A good man!" he jeered. "You're a fine fisherman, aren't you? You earn a blooming lot of money, don't you? Who caught most fish last year, you or me? Who has made enough money in eight years to buy a smack of his own? Answer me that, will you?"

"This is a queer world," the skipper answered philosophically. "We don't all get our deserts. Usually the biggest fools has the best luck."

"What do you mean by that?" Jim Heckford shouted angrily. "You'd blooming well better not call me a fool, or else there'll be a row. Look here! I'll bet you what you like I'll catch more fish than any smack in Normsby this year. Is it on?"

Here the "funny man" of the *Kittiewake* thought it necessary to put in his word. He was a tall, gaunt, grizzled man whose appearance at first sight by no means

suggested humour. He spoke with great seriousness, taking his short clay pipe from between his lips.

"Why, Jim, who's going to bet against you? We all know that you're the smartest sailor and best fisherman in Normsby. And, what's more, you never brag, neither. Your genius is only equaled by your modesty. What you say you'll do you do. That's why I was so surprised at the way they were talking about you in the Home last night."

Jim frowned.

"Oh! they was talking about me in the Home, was they? Pity they can't find something better to do. And what the blazes had they got to say about me?"

"They was saying as how you ought to change the name of your ship."

"Oh! ought I? And what do they want me to call her, then?"

"They said as how her name ought to be the *Boasters All*, instead of the *Brothers All*."

"Who said that?" Jim asked threateningly.

"Oh! I forget. But I stuck up for you. Says I: 'Now I call Jim Heckford a very modest man. You may say he's got a good opinion of himself, but then,' says I, 'why shouldn't he have? Ain't he the smartest sailor in the town? Ain't all the girls in love with him? Ain't there that Polly Luff, the prettiest gal in the town, almost dying for him? If he was a boaster he'd brag about that, wouldn't he? But you never hear him mention it.' They all laughed when I said that, though I'm sure I can't think why." (It was well-known in the town that Polly Luff had rejected Jim's advances in the most decisive manner.)

Jim interrupted the speaker with an oath.

"Let's have no more of your lip," he said, looking dangerous. "I'd come on board and smash your head in for two pins."

The humorist continued unmoved.

"And as for his being proud of being part-owner of his ship, why shouldn't he be?" says I. "You may say that it's more by luck than brains that he made his money, but considering the amount the Heckfords spend in drink, it's a wonder they have any money at all. And even suppose they *did* borrow the money," says I, "what's there in that? I call it darned clever of them to find anyone fool enough to lend it them: I should like to do the same myself, only I reckon there can't be *two* such fools in the country."

"Who said we borrowed the money?" Jim Heckford broke in angrily:

"Oh! I disremember."

"Oh! of course. You never do remember, do you?" sneered Jim bitterly. "I suppose it wasn't one of your own dashed lies, was it? Look here, Mr. Blooming Lock, if I have any more of your lip, you'll get my fist in your face!"

The humorist now thought that he had gone far enough in his favourite pastime of riling Jim Heckford. He looked at Jim with an expression of pained surprise, as one who has done a kindness to a friend and received in return the blackest ingratitude.

"Why, Jim, I should never have thought it of you," he said. "Here have I been sticking up for you and taking your part, when everybody else was running you down, and all I gets for it is to be swore at! It's enough to shake one's faith in human nature."

And, shaking his head in sad regret at the depravity of man, the philosopher turned away, leaving Jim swearing sulkily:

* * *

A CRUEL DEED.

THE *Brothers All* had a most successful fishing season, and when she put into the Faroe port of Strangles Fiord her crew were in the highest spirits. They found the *Kittiewake* in the harbour, and discovered that she had got only thirty tons of fish. As they themselves had sixty tons this pleased them greatly, for there was considerable jealousy between the two crews, and the men of the *Brothers All* were delighted at the chance of crowing over their rivals.

They went ashore in great glee, but, unfortunately, their mirth, like that of Ralph the Rover, "was wickedness." Their idea of amusement was a debauch. They went to the local inn with the avowed intention of having a drinking-bout, and there they found the crew of the *Kittiewake* drinking temperance drinks.

Jim Heckford at once ordered spirits for his crew, and half-contemptuously offered to treat the *Kittiewake* men:

"Don't drink that muck!" he remarked to them airily. "It makes me sick to look at it: Have something decent. I'll treat you if you're afraid to pay. I know you don't like parting, any of you."

There was some truth in this taunt. The men of the *Kittiewake* were notorious for their closefistedness in money matters. It

must be said in excuse for them that they were mostly married men with families to keep, while the Heckfords were all bachelors:

Jim Heckford's jeer struck home. The shaft that is barbed with truth is always the one that pierces the deepest. The skipper maintained a contemptuous silence, but Lock took it upon himself to answer for the crew.

"Whenever I have a sovereign to spend," he remarked vaguely, addressing the crowd in general, "I always like to flash it about in every pub I go to. Else people wouldn't know what a great man I was."

Jim Heckford glared at him:

"I suppose you're trying to get at me, Mr. Blooming Lock," he said: "I don't care. I'm not afraid to spend a shilling, if you are. I earn my money, and I spend my money."

"A fool and his money are soon parted," said Lock.

"And some fools can't earn any money to part with!" Jim retorted. "How much fish have you caught this trip?"

The conversation then turned upon professional matters, and the season's fishing was discussed with much boasting as to his own luck and skill on the part of Jim, much sarcasm, covert and otherwise, on the part of the *Kittiewake's* men.

The talk grew loud and stormy, but as the *Kittiewake* men were quite sober, there was no fight. They left early, before the men of the *Brothers All* were fairly drunk, or else perhaps the peace might not have been preserved.

The Heckfords and their men stayed all night and enjoyed themselves thoroughly—that is, they had a grand carouse and fell asleep, one by one, where they sat, towards the small hours of the morning. They woke in the afternoon, sober, though jaded, and had some more drink, but not much, as they were to sail that evening, and it was necessary for them to be fairly sober in order to get the ship under way.

As they were about to leave the inn the men of the *Kittiewake* entered, and the compliments of the season were duly passed:

"We'll tell them you're coming soon," was Jim's parting shot; "but seeing you're so loaded with fish you can't be expected to sail fast, you know, so they mustn't be in too much of a hurry to see your pretty faces."

"Don't you be too sure of getting home before us yet, Jim," Lock retorted. "If you get on the booze I shouldn't bet much on the *Brothers All* getting to Normsby at

all. I hope she's insured. And take care you don't run her on to the Fair and Foul Isles."

"Insured!" Jim answered angrily. "Of course, she's not insured! What should I want to insure her for? Do you think I'm such a blooming fool I can't look after my own ship? Yah! come on, you men!" And the crew of the *Brothers All* went on their way to the harbour.

They had had just enough drink to make them mischievous, and in the harbour lay the *Kittiewake*, with only a man and a boy on board. A sudden temptation came to Jim Heckford.

"Here! let's board the rotten ship," he said, "and make hay on board. We'll give these water-drinking swine a treat!"

In their present mood this suggestion exactly suited the crew. They went on board, overpowered the solitary man and the boy, and proceeded to "make hay." They did no actual damage—they were not drunk enough to go so far as that—but they soon reduced the whole ship to an indescribable state of confusion.

Down below they threw all the men's spare clothes and bedding into a jumbled heap. Cooking utensils and other gear they served in the same way. Everything movable was put exactly where it ought not to be. Cupboards were nailed up and hatches screwed down. On deck they loosed the halliards and sheets and twisted them all together in an inextricable tangle.

Then they went to their own ship, roaring with laughter. It was a deed of shame, for to a sailor his ship is sacred. You may take any liberty with himself rather than touch his ship. It was an outrage which even the most easy-tempered captain could not be expected to forgive.

* * *

THE WRECK.

THE *Brothers All* started on her return home gaily enough, for the weather was fine and the breeze fair. But there was a plentiful supply of spirits on board, and after the first two days these favourable conditions tempted the crew to another carouse. The consequence was that by the evening they were all more or less drunk and quite unfit to navigate the ship.

It was a bright moonlight night, and to keep a safe look-out ought to have been a perfectly easy task. But Jim Heckford,

whose watch it was (fortunately, by the way, for he was unable afterwards to blame anyone else for what happened), was more than half-asleep, and the helmsman was letting the ship go pretty well as she liked.

A strict look-out ought to have been kept, for the ship was now passing the Orkney Isles. None of the able seamen on board, however, were in a state to remember this, and so no one saw that the ship was heading straight for an outlying rock of that group.

Suddenly there was a violent shock and crash of breaking timber, followed almost immediately by the sound of water pouring into the hold. The shock and noise effectually roused the crew, and terror quickly sobered them. They saw at once that the ship was doomed. The breeze and her impetus had taken her off the rock into deep water, but with a gaping rent in her starboard bow.

With a fearful string of oaths and curses Jim Heckford ordered the boat to be launched. The men hurriedly collected their kits, put in provisions and water, and pulled off as quickly as they could. Then they waited in silence, and watched the ship gradually settle down, till at the end of a quarter of an hour she made a final plunge and disappeared.

The men's hearts were hot and bitter with anger and disappointment, but no one spoke. Jim Heckford looked so savage that to have made any remark imputing blame to him would almost have been courting death, or at least serious bodily injury, while even condolences would probably have been fiercely resented. It was a sign of his mastery over his crew that no one dared to make any remark; for the ship was worked on the profit-sharing system, and they were all losers.

Jim glared round on the crew.

"Well, the blooming ship is gone," he said. "It's no use talking about that. The question is—what are we to do now?"

The crew then debated whether they should row to Orkney, or wait for the *Kittiewake* (which they knew was to start for home a few hours after them) to pick them up. Eventually they decided on the latter course, and rowing to meet her, sighted her at daybreak.

When they came alongside of her they were received at first with mute amazement, and then, when the situation was realised by those on board, with shouts of laughter. After a short parley they clambered on deck, savage and sulky, and

their boat was taken on board. Then they began to have a very hot time.

The crew of the *Kittiewake* showed themselves altogether deficient in generosity and pity for enemies in distress. With the exception of the captain, they all began to vie with one another in mocking and deriding the unfortunate men.

"What'll you take for your share of the profits when you get ashore, Jim?"

"I suppose you'll all be buying your own houses now?"

"The skipper will build a row of cottages with his share."

"They'll be the talk of Normsby all the Winter. Won't they be proud, too! Oh, Lord!"

"Of course, you don't expect the Heckfords to do things the same as anybody else. They're much too smart for the likes of us. They're the master-chaps, they are."

"When they get another smack they'll have to call her the *Boozers All*."

Much more of similar airy and graceful raillery did the crew of the *Brothers All* have to put up with. Jim Heckford grew more and more savage.

"Look here!" he said at last. "We've had about enough of this. There are as many of us as there are of you, and if you go too far, it may be the worse for you!"

"None of that, Jim Heckford," said the skipper of the *Kittiewake*, who had hitherto maintained a contemptuous silence. "If you attack us, that's mutiny. If you kill any of us, that's murder. If we kill any of you in self-defence, that's justifiable homicide. So be careful."

In the evening Lock, the "funny man," who was also a poet, recited to the crew a poem which he had composed during the afternoon—apparently much to his own satisfaction:

It was the good ship *Brothers All*,
From Iceland she did sail;
But never to Normsby did she get,
Although there wasn't no gale.

She didn't collide with no iceberg,
No ship didn't run her down,
It wasn't no fog or snow-storm
That caused the poor vessel to drown.

Oh, no! If I must be truthful,
The brothers all was drunk,
So on to a rock they blundered
And the *Brothers All* was sunk.

Her captain was James Heckford,
Most commonly called Jim,
But drink's been the ruin of many—
And drink was the ruin of him.

And that is the end of my story,
And the moral you'll guess, I think.
Be warned by the fate of the Heckfords,
And never give way to drink.

This effusion greatly delighted the crew of the *Kittiewake*. They made a song of it, and chanted it in chorus, while the Heckfords ground their teeth with impotent rage.

So matters went on for several days, the feeling between the two crews growing ever more bitter. Then, when they were opposite Peterhead, it struck the *Kittiewake's* captain that he would like to go ashore, and he gave leave to such of his crew as wished to accompany him. They all wanted to, except Lock.

George Ridley, who, although his general health had greatly benefited by the trip, was that day slightly indisposed, did not feel inclined to go ashore, and also remained on board. But he gave one of the men a letter to post addressed to his father. It was merely a hasty note, saying that he had arrived at Peterhead safely. He made no mention of the *Brothers All*, reserving that as a tale to tell his father when they met.

"Well, so long!" said the skipper to Lock, as he and the rest of the crew put off in the boat. "We shan't be long. Look after these beauties while we're away."

"Oh, all right!" said Lock. "I'll keep an eye on them."

Neither of them anticipated any danger from the men of the *Brothers All*, though Lock was to be left alone with them. The ship would be well within sight of the shore all the time; and, besides, it was so obvious that any outrage on the part of the seamen must meet with speedy detection and retribution that it seemed absurd to suppose they would attempt one.

George Ridley and Lock were now left on board the *Kittiewake* alone with the crew of the *Brothers All*. Ridley had rather sympathised with the shipwrecked sailors, and had vainly tried to stem the torrent of ridicule poured forth on the unfortunate men.

In spite of Ridley's mild protests, Lock continued to do all he could to irritate still further the Heckfords and their crew.

"Why don't you let us land you here and stay there?" he asked. "You might take to gardening. It would suit you much better than fishing. You're just fit to grow cabbages and look after pigs. But as to fishing—Lord, you're no use for that. And I shouldn't care to go back to Normsby if I were you. You'll be the laughing-stock o

the whole town. Lord! Won't you have a hot time of it this Winter!"

Jim Heckford advanced threateningly.

"You'd better take care what you're saying, you water-drinking hound!" he said fiercely.

"What! Do you think I'm going to ask you what I'm to say, you drunken swine!" Lock retorted.

Then Jim Heckford's temper gave way. He aimed a fierce blow at Lock's mouth with his fist. Lock dodged the blow and returned it, catching him fairly on the jaw and knocking him down. Jim shouted to his crew, who at once rushed to his assistance, and set upon Lock.

Then there was a horrible scene. The men were half-mad with rage at their loss and the baiting they had endured for the last few days, and lost all control of themselves. They knocked Lock down and kicked him savagely about the head and body. George Ridley flew to his rescue, but was promptly knocked senseless by a blow from Wily Bill. Then Jim Heckford seized an iron bar which lay near him and brought it down with a crash on Lock's forehead. Lock ceased to struggle or groan, and lay still and silent.

The men, suddenly brought to their senses, looked at one another with white faces. Jim knelt down, tore open the man's jersey and laid his hand on his heart:

"He's dead," he said, as he rose and faced the other men defiantly. "And a good job too. Now heave the beggar overboard."

The men seemed unwilling.

"Perhaps he ain't dead yet," Jack Heckford suggested.

"All the more reason to get rid of him," Jim answered. "Dead men tell no tales. We don't want to get ten years in quod each for mutiny and attempted murder, do we? Besides, he is dead, I'll swear it. And that will be a hanging matter—a *hanging matter for all of us, do you hear?*" He shrieked the last words almost hysterically, for, in spite of his attempt at bravado, he was really as much frightened as the others.

The men recognised the truth of what he said, and slowly and reluctantly, with white faces and trembling hands, took up the body and threw it overboard. Jim stood by, watching, and insisted on each of them lending a hand.

"Now," he said, "we've all got to swear that he fell overboard accidentally."

"All very fine, Jim," growled Jack Heckford, "but what about the gent?"

"Oh! I'll settle with him," said Jim:

Water was thrown on Ridley's face, and he revived.

Jim looked at him threateningly.

"Look here, mister!" he said. "Lock's fallen overboard. Are you ready to swear to that if any questions are asked? We don't mean to get into trouble along of you."

"What!" cried Ridley, horrified. "You mean that you've *murdered* him! No! I won't swear to any lie of yours. I'll swear that you killed him between you. I hope to see the whole lot of you swing for it."

"Bind his arms, Jack," said Jim.

Ridley was promptly seized and his arms fast bound behind him:

"Now, then, do you stick to that?"

Jim asked him: "If you do we shall heave you overboard. But if you'll swear solemnly to say that there's only been an accident you'll be all right. You're a gentleman, and they'll believe you."

"An excellent reason for telling a cowardly lie!" said Ridley scornfully. "No, you hounds! If I live, I'll tell the truth. As for you, Jim Heckford, you'll be hanged to a certainty, whether you kill me or not. Remember that!"

"Then overboard you go!" cried Jim: "I don't swing for the likes of you. Here, catch hold of him, you men."

Wily Bill came up to him:

"Make the lads do it this time," he said, in an undertone. "Then they won't dare tell. It's the only way to make them safe."

Jim saw the wisdom of this advice, and followed it. By violent threats he made the reluctant apprentices each lend a hand, and they seized George Ridley by the arms and legs. The victim did not condescend to any craven intreaties or useless struggles. He maintained an attitude of cold contempt.

"Now, then," said Jim Heckford. "I'll give you a last chance. Will you take the oath, or shall I give the word to heave?"

"Heave, by all means!" George answered. "But you might at least *weight* me well, so that it will be over quickly."

This request, obviously being reasonable, was granted. Sufficient lead was attached to him to insure his sinking promptly.

Then Jim Heckford gave the word: "Heave him up!" The 'prentices—among them the boy Arthur Stone—obeyed, while Jim and Wily Bill watched to see that each of them was at least touching the unfortunate young man.

"Mark my words, Jim Heckford," said Ridley. "You'll swing for this!"

"I'll chance that," Jim answered savagely. "Over with him."

The lads with a simultaneous swing sent the body flying. There was a sullen splash, and without a word or a cry, George Ridley disappeared for ever from the sight of man.

"This work don't suit me, Jim Heckford," said the man Purcell, in a tone of horror, which implied, however, regret for the necessity of the deed rather than blame or opposition. The rest of the men seemed to share his feeling.

Jim turned on Purcell fiercely:

"I daresay it don't!" he said. "Do you think I'm amusing myself? Can't you see that it's the only thing to be done? Yes! and there's got to be worse work yet before we're through with it, if we don't all want to swing."

"What's that?" asked another man uneasily.

"Why, the crew of the blinking ship, of course! We must do away with them—every man of them. Else they'll hang us to a certainty."

"Couldn't we say that Lock and the gent-fell overboard?" suggested one of the crew.

"Fell overboard!" repeated Jim, with great scorn. "A blooming likely yarn! Of course, they'll believe that, won't they! And, of course, they won't want to know why we didn't pick them up, seeing that it's a chock calm, and they being both good swimmers? If you can't think of anything better than that you might as well keep your mouth shut."

"Jim is right!" Wily Bill said emphatically. "We *must* go through with the job now we've begun it. Is there anybody here says different?"

Nobody answered. The men were scared and cowed, and in no frame of mind to resist the brothers.

* * *

WORSE WORK STILL

IT was now getting dusk, and was about time for the men of the *Kittiewake* to come off. The smack had been sailing all this time under very easy canvas about a mile from the town. There was a slight mist, which, though not thick enough to be dangerous, hid the town from the sight of the men and had effectually screened their doings from any prying eyes on shore.

They now sailed closer in to the harbour,

and lit their light, and soon heard the boat of the *Kittiewake* putting off to them: Then, according to the scheme devised by the brothers, as the boat approached they kept away, drawing her on until she was at a safe distance from land.

A fresh breeze had now sprung up:

The men in the boat naturally could not understand this, and the captain and mate alternately shouted and swore at the men on the *Kittiewake*.

"What the blazes are you doing? What on earth are you playing at? Are you all drunk on board—or mad?"—and so forth: Then when they drew up to her—"Luff, you fools, luff! Shake the wind out of her sails! You'll be on the top of us!" The smack had missed the boat by a few inches:

For a moment the *Kittiewake* men were speechless with amazement and terror. Then they sent up a shout of indignation at such criminal clumsiness.

"Lock!" shouted the captain: "Where's Lock? What the blazes are you up to? Are you trying to drown us?"

There was no answer. Jim Heckford was at the helm. His eyes had a ghastly glare in them, his lips were firmly set. He brought the ship round again and made straight for the boat. This time he made no mistake, and caught the boat fairly in the centre. There was a noise of crashing wood, and shouts of men in mortal terror. Then the *Kittiewake* passed on, leaving only a mass of struggling humanity in the water.

The men shouted for help after the disappearing vessel, but met with no response: Then it gradually dawned upon them that they were being deliberately murdered. The air rang with curses loud and bitter, but still the ship sailed pitilessly on, and gradually, one by one, the voices ceased, and silence lay on the deep.

On the *Kittiewake*, too, there was silence, the silence of shame and fear. The men avoided each other's eyes, as men do when they know that they have done a deed which is a shame to their common manhood.

After a time Jim Heckford spoke to his brother Bill, who was standing near him:

"I suppose there's no chance of any of them getting to land?" he murmured hoarsely.

Bill shook his head.

"No," he said; "the tide is dead against them. And there's nothing about to pick them up, thank God!"

It was a curious instance of the way in which men pervert human speech. He

thanked God that a scheme of wholesale murder should be successful!

Then, when the men had had time to recover themselves somewhat, the three brothers held a consultation.

"What do you mean to do, Jim?" Bill asked.

"Scuttle the blooming ship in deep water near the shore and land in the boat," Jim answered. "Nobody need ever know we've been aboard of her. They'll think she was lost with all hands."

"There's one thing I've been thinking of," Bill said anxiously. "Suppose the men talked about us being on board when they landed at Peterhead? We couldn't deny, then, that we'd been on the *Kittiewake*. And it would look blooming queer if all our lot were to come safe ashore and say that all the others had been drowned."

After a pause for consideration, Jack observed:

"We might say that, when the smack was sinking, we agreed that each crew should take its own boat, and that theirs was swamped and ours got safe to shore."

Bill grunted doubtfully.

"That *might* do," he said, "if we have to own up that we were on the *Kittiewake*. But it'll be jolly dangerous. If once the police get to suspect anything and start questioning the boys it's all up with us."

"Well," said Jim, "what we've got to do is to find out how much they know about us at Peterhead. We'll bring up outside Arbroath when it's dark, and land you there, and you can go to Peterhead and find out. You're so blooming clever, you know." The strain on his nerves had not improved either his temper or his manners.

Bill agreed. But during his watch that night, as he was meditating on the situation, a really masterly idea occurred to him:

He was struck by the perfect resemblance of the *Kittiewake* to the *Brothers All*. In fact, both vessels had been built that year by the same maker on an exactly identical plan, were painted alike, and only differed in their names and the numbers on their sails.

Of course, two similar smacks soon acquire distinctive marks—especially on their sails, but these two had not yet had time to do so. "We might be the *Brothers All*," he said to himself. Then the thought flashed upon him: *Why not pass off the "Kittiewake" as the "Brothers All"?* Names and numbers could be altered, and no one would be able to tell the difference except by

careful inspection, which no one would have a right to make.

The more he thought of the plan the more he liked it. It would practically restore to them the ship they had lost, with a considerable quantity of fish; it would save them from the ridicule they would have had to meet for losing her, and it would not expose them to danger or suspicion.

Nothing would seem more natural. The *Brothers All* would simply have made a safe journey from Faroe; the *Kittiewake* would have been lost at sea with all hands after touching at Peterhead. The only weak point in the plan was the possibility that the crew of the *Kittiewake* had talked about their accident at Peterhead. He determined to ascertain the truth on this point.

His two brothers fell in with his views when he expounded them next morning, and that evening after dark they brought up off the port of Arbroath—having during the day thrown overboard every relic of the crew of the *Kittiewake* and of George Ridley: They did not know, however, that the man Purcell had found George Ridley's gold watch, and secretly taken possession of it.

Two men landed Bill in the smack's boat, and returned without going ashore. Bill took the train for Peterhead, meditating on the journey whether, supposing the *Kittiewake's* crew *had* mentioned the shipwreck, it would be possible still to adhere to the story he had concocted, laughing at the other tale as a joke of the *Kittiewake's* men.

After all, there would be the irresistible fact that the *Brothers All* was afloat, safe and sound; for it was not likely that anyone would have the extraordinary acuteness to guess at his daring fraud. It was one of those deeds whose very audacity makes their chief safeguard. But, as it happened, he did not have to decide the question:

He ascertained by careful inquiries of the Coastguard and at the public-houses that nothing was known of the *Brothers All*, and it was evident that the crew of the *Kittiewake* had said nothing about them: It seemed that they were not on particularly good terms with the Peterhead people, and were not inclined to be communicative. The possibility remained that they had telegraphed the news to Normsby, but this he determined to ignore. If they had done so, which was not probable, the men of the *Brothers All* could easily pass it off as a practical joke:

He returned to Arbroath the following evening by the train he had agreed upon with his brothers, and found the smack's boat waiting for him in the harbour, with two men in charge. One of them was Purcell, who had utilised the interval to dispose of Ridley's watch in the manner already described in the pawnbroker's letter to Mr. Ridley.

When Bill got on board he told his brothers that all was safe, so far as Peterhead was concerned, and they determined to carry out their plan. Accordingly, by a liberal use of tar and paint, the name of the ship and the figures on the sail were altered, and the *Kittiewake* became the *Brothers All*. They impressed upon the crew the necessity of absolute silence as to what had happened, assuring them with many oaths that if it became known they would everyone of them be hanged.

The boy Arthur Stone caused them some anxiety. It so happened that the youngest apprentice on the *Kittiewake* had been his companion and playfellow from childhood, and the two were very fond of each other. Arthur Stone was an affectionate boy and felt the loss of his friend keenly. Moreover, the whole tragedy had been too much for his nerves. He moped about the deck listlessly, and was frequently found crying by himself. Also he talked incessantly in his sleep, and was restless and painfully nervous, starting at every sound.

"That boy will hang the lot of us!" Bill said savagely to his brothers. "The best place for him would be overboard."

Jim was inclined to agree, but Jack protested energetically. To have had to drown the men of the *Kittiewake* had been bad enough, though, as he put it, they had been obliged to do so in self-defence, but to throw a boy of their own crew overboard when there was no obvious necessity for it, was a very different thing. As the rest of the crew would certainly have supported Jack, Bill was obliged to give in, though with muttered misgiving.

A gloomy, silent crew took the smack into Normsby harbour. There they assumed a more cheerful demeanour, partly put on to avert suspicion, partly from genuine relief that the voyage was over. No suspicion of any kind was aroused, and the fish were sold in the ordinary course of business.

Such was the extraordinary story of which the main outlines and such details as he knew were now told by Arthur Stone to

Mr. Ridley. The lawyer did not doubt the boy's statement for a minute. It was obvious that he was speaking the truth.

* * *

THE ARREST.

AFTER dark that evening, Mr. Ridley took the boy to the police station and there interviewed the head of the police. The inspector was at first inclined to be incredulous, but was soon convinced of the truth of the boy's narrative.

Early next morning he procured a warrant to search the ship and apprehend the crew. Then, accompanied by another policeman and a man who had superintended the building of the ship, he went on board the *Brothers All*.

The first thing to do obviously was to ascertain whether the *Brothers All* was really the *Kittiewake*, and it was for this purpose that he had brought with him the shipbuilder. A careful examination soon showed that the ship *had* been tampered with, and her name and number altered, and the shipwright declared that he could swear to her being really the *Kittiewake*.

The boy's story being thus confirmed, the inspector proceeded to execute his warrant, and in a few hours every one of the crew was in gaol.

Nothing was allowed to leak out as to the cause of their arrest, and Arthur Stone was also kept in custody, in order to prevent his being got at by the relatives or friends of the prisoners, though he received exceptional treatment, and was assured that no charge would be preferred against him. The curiosity in the town, therefore, was great, and at the hearing before the magistrates the court was crowded to its utmost capacity.

Arthur Stone was the chief witness, and his tale was listened to in breathless silence. Nobody doubted that he was speaking the truth, for his words and his emotion bore every sign of sincerity, and it was felt besides that no boy could possibly have invented such a story.

The more intelligent amongst the spectators, however, doubted whether any jury, however sure they might morally be of the prisoners' guilt, would dare to convict men of murder on the unsupported evidence of a boy.

It was Jim Heckford, who, by a piece of amazing folly, such as uneducated men are wont to commit under the stress of excitement, supplied the necessary corroboration:

When he saw Arthur Stone leaving the witness-box he allowed his uncontrollable temper to master him.

"You young hound," he hissed at him as he passed. "I wish we'd thrown you overboard, as Bill wanted to. If I ever have a chance at you, you look out for yourself, that's all!"

The words, though meant to be whispered, were clearly audible to the Court, and the magistrates exchanged significant glances.

"You silly fool! you've given the whole thing away," whispered Bill savagely. Then, quickly holding up his hand to the magistrates, he said: "Gentlemen, I offer myself as Queen's evidence."

"So do I, gentlemen," said Purcell eagerly: "Don't take him! He was a lot worse than me. He was a ringleader, he was—as bad as his brother Jim. Let it be me."

Then the rest of the prisoners, every man and lad, except Jim Heckford, joined in the shameful competition, and there arose a clamour of confused shouts and intreaties to the magistrates, amidst which the voice of Bill Heckford could be heard continually repeating:

"I was first, gentlemen! I was first!"

It was a painful and degrading exhibition of human nature at its worst, and the spectators gave vent to their disgust in loud hissing.

"Silence!" said the chairman after a time. Anxiety silenced the prisoners, and curiosity the spectators, and quiet was once more restored.

"We shall certainly not accept any of the prisoners as Queen's evidence at this stage of the proceedings," the chairman said. "That will be a matter for the proper authorities to decide later on. In the meantime I warn them against making any incriminating statement. Call the next witness!"

Mr. Ridley was called and told how his son had sailed on board the *Kittiewake* for the sake of his health, and identified as his the watch that had been pawned at Arbroath.

James Hogg was called and identified Purcell as the man who had pawned the watch.

The foreman who had superintended the building of the *Kittiewake* and the *Brothers All*, swore that the ship which had sailed into Normsby harbour as the *Brothers All* was really the *Kittiewake*.

This concluded the evidence, and the chairman told the prisoners that if they

wished to have legal assistance or to summon witnesses he would remand them, but that otherwise they could reserve their defence, and he would at once commit them for trial at the Assizes. To this they agreed:

* * *

THE TRIAL AND SENTENCE.

THE case naturally excited intense interest throughout the country, and when the trial took place at the Assizes thousands stood outside the Court, unable to obtain admission. The Crown lawyers had decided to allow the youngest of the apprentices next to Arthur Stone to turn Queen's evidence, as being presumably the least guilty of the crew.

Mr. Ridley, James Hogg, and the ship-builder repeated the evidence they had given before the magistrates.

Arthur Stone then told his tale as before, and though he was keenly and sharply cross-examined by the clever Q.C. who had been retained for the defence, his evidence remained quite unshaken.

Then the apprentice, a smart, intelligent-looking lad, was called, and, though he had not been allowed to hear Arthur Stone's evidence, his answers agreed perfectly with the boy's tale, and the eminent Q.C.'s desperate efforts to make him contradict the former witness were quite futile.

The lawyer saw that his case was hopeless, but none the less he fought it desperately. He admitted that the ship in Normsby harbour was really the *Kittiewake*, but that, he contended, was no proof that his clients had murdered the crew of the *Kittiewake*. He suggested that what had happened was this:

The crew of the *Kittiewake* had for some reason unknown gone off from her for a time in their boat, leaving one man on board. That man had fallen overboard, and the *Kittiewake* had drifted away and been seized as a derelict by the men of the *Brothers All*, who had then conceived the unhappy idea of converting her into their own lost smack. The men in the *Kittiewake's* boat had either been drowned or had been picked up by some outward-bound ship and taken abroad, or had reached some island or remote spot from which they were unable to communicate with England:

Or another explanation was possible: Everything might have happened exactly as the boys had said except that there had been no fight on the *Kittiewake*, and that all the men on the *Kittiewake*, including

Lock and George Ridley, had gone ashore at Peterhead, and had been *accidentally* drowned by James Heckford on their return. A perfectly natural fear of a plausible but unfounded charge of murder, together with other obvious motives, had caused the crew of the *Brothers All* to act as they had subsequently done.

As to the evidence of the two boys, he attached no weight to it. They had evidently concocted their tale together, actuated either by spite against the crew—caused perhaps by fancied ill-treatment—or by a morbid craving for notoriety. It would be a most reckless thing for the jury to convict men of murder on the evidence of two boys.

"No, gentlemen," he concluded, "there is no proof that these men were murdered. There is no proof even that they are dead. They are quite possibly at this moment alive and well. Think of what your feelings would be if, after having sent the prisoners to the gallows you were one day to see their supposed victims arrive in Normsby safe and sound!"

The judge then summed up, carefully going over the various points of the case, but in such a way that at the end of his charge no doubt was felt as to what the verdict would be.

"But remember, gentlemen of the jury," he concluded impressively, "you are not to find the prisoners guilty, merely because you think that there is a great probability that they are guilty. You must be convinced that they cannot possibly be innocent. The law does not take human life by guesswork."

The jury retired, and remained away half-an-hour. Then the foreman delivered their verdict.

James Heckford and William Heckford guilty of murder. The other prisoners guilty of aiding and abetting, and recommended to mercy.

The prisoners were then asked the usual questions as to whether they had any reason to offer why sentence should not be passed upon them. There was at once a clamour of protest. The judge silenced them, and took them one by one. Jim Heckford declined sullenly to say anything; Bill protested violently.

"Why should there be any difference made between me and the others? They were just as bad as me. Jim was the ringleader. We only obeyed his orders, me the same as the rest. It will be a wicked shame if I'm hanged and they're let off!"

"Any statement you wish to make you can put into writing, and it will be forwarded to the proper quarter," the judge said gravely.

He nodded to the next man, who at once began a voluble protest that he had all through acted only under compulsion from James and William Heckford, and would most willingly have resisted them if he had thought that the rest of the crew would have supported him. The others all repeated the same tale, the only noteworthy addition being that of one of the apprentices, who rather pathetically remarked: "I'm too young to die, my lord!"

The judge then assumed the black cap.

"James Heckford, William Heckford—" he went through their names—"you have been found guilty on evidence which leaves not a shadow of doubt in my mind, two of you of perpetrating and the others of aiding and abetting, a series of murders as cruel and cowardly as any that have ever come to my knowledge. The cruelty of the leaders has only been equaled by the cowardice of their followers. For you, James Heckford and William Heckford, I can hold out no hope of mercy, and can only earnestly intreat you to use the short time left to you on earth to make your peace with Heaven."

He paused and turned to the other prisoners.

"The rest of you have been recommended to mercy. That recommendation will be forwarded to the proper quarter, and it is possible that a merciful view will be taken of your case. But I warn you, especially the elder among you, that you must not rely upon that."

The judge paused before passing sentence:

"And now there only remains for me the painful duty of passing sentence in accordance with the law. You will be taken to the place whence you came. . . . And may the Lord have mercy on your souls!"

The prisoners were taken back to gaol amid a storm of hoots and jeers, for public feeling was very strong against them.

Here each of them was allowed to send in his own version of what had happened and his plea for mercy to the Home Office, and all except Jim Heckford did so.

In the end all except the two ringleaders were reprieved and were condemned to various terms of imprisonment.

James and William Heckford were granted no reprieve, but duly suffered the extreme penalty of the law

Half-Minute Stories.

The Brightest and Best Little Stories of all Times.

The jokes on this and the succeeding page are from the pen of Mr. Walter Emanuel, a regular contributor to "Punch," and one of the best known humorous writers of the present day. They are selected from his recently-published book, "Only My Fun." Readers are invited to contribute to this feature, and should send anecdotes to "Half-Minute Stories," THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Where the stories are not original their source must be stated.

THE POOR MAN'S BEQUEST.

AN old man once lay a-dying. And he called his sons and daughters together—of whom there were a great number, for he was very poor—and addressed them thus :

"My children, I am about to be summoned hence. I am a poor man, and have little to leave, but all I have I willingly give you."

Saying which, he beckoned them to his bedside, kissed them, and gave them measles.



AN ACCIDENT.

It was at a crowded "At Home."

A lady wished to pass in front of him, so the young man backed. In so doing, his heels stepped on someone's toes.

"One million pardons! I do trust I have not hurt you!" he exclaimed, as he turned round.

Then, when he saw who it was, he uttered a cry as though he had been stabbed.

He had been polite to his brother.



A FATAL PRESENTIMENT.

A WOMAN who had quarreled with her husband and left him, dreamt one night that he was dead.

The next night she had a similar dream: Also the night after, and the following night:

It was a presentiment.

So, greatly agitated, and prepared for the worst, she took the train to town, and hastened home. Trembling, she rang the bell, when the door was at once opened by her husband, who had never been better in his life.

The shock killed her:

* "Only My Fun," by Walter Emanuel.

THE SNUB.

"WELL," said Lady Bore to the distinguished author, "I hope you will one day come to dinner with us at the 'Doldrums,' and sleep there."

"I should certainly sleep there," answered the distinguished author with a bow.



A REBUFF.

"Cook," said the kind mistress, offering her servant a novel she had written, "would you like this book to read?"

"No, mum," flared up the cook, "I have more than I can do as it is, and I won't be put on any more!"



THE FORTUNE-HUNTER'S DILEMMA.

"WELL?" said the handsome fortune-hunter to the rich man's plain daughter.

"Well, my sweet?"

"It is no good," she sobbed, "no good. Father is as unyielding as iron. He will not hear of the match."

"Oh!"

"He says that if I marry you I shall not have a penny from him."

"My poor darling!"

"But listen. I have made up my mind."

"How—what do you mean?"

"Jack!" cried the plain girl, throwing her arms round the fortune-hunter's neck: "Jack! I intend to marry you in spite of all."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" groaned the fortune-hunter.

Published by Geo. Routledge & Sons Ltd.

THE TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

HE was a dear little tot of four, with long, flaxen curls:

It was tea-time:

He had five pieces of bread-and-butter, four buns, sixteen fancy biscuits, and a jumble:

Suddenly the little fellow leant back in his chair and burst out crying.

His doting parents rushed to his side.

"My angel—what is the matter?"

"Boo—hoo—I've—lost my appetite!"

THE WISH.

THE great artist was dead:

His unpopular wife survived him:

The public demanded that the great artist should be buried in Westminster Abbey.

So the widow was asked if she would have any objection.

"No," she replied, "so long as I, too, may be buried there."

"We shall be very happy to bury you there," answered the authorities:

DISTINCTION.

"OH, darling, such good news!" cried Mrs. Snob, running in to see Mrs. Tufthunter: "You will be green with envy."

"Well, what is it this time?" asked the rival anxiously:

"Why, my dear, Clara has caught the Duchess' cold!"

THE SURPRISE.

THE country doctor was back from his holiday:

He was feeling better for the change until he met his young and enthusiastic *locum tenens*.

"Well," said the doctor, "and how have you got on?"

"Oh, splendidly, sir," answered the *locum tenens*. "I think you'll be pleased. I have entirely cured Sir John Bulch of his gout, and I don't think either of the Miss Goldies will have any more neuralgia, and—greatest triumph of all—I have convinced the rich old lady up at the Castle that, as is a fact, there is absolutely nothing the matter with her!"

"Good Heavens!" said the doctor, mopping his brow, "you have ruined me!"

A REGRETTABLE MISUNDERSTANDING.

THE White Man approached the Redskin Chief:

"Why not bury the hatchet?" asked the White Man, holding out his hand.

The sullen face of the Redskin Chief was made almost beautiful by a smile:

"Ay, why not?" he said, as he buried the hatchet in the White Man's head:

THE CLUMSY NEPHEW.

THE rich uncle was very ill indeed:

The favourite nephew had come to pay him a visit.

The rich uncle bade him pour himself out a glass of wine.

"Well, my dear uncle," said the nephew, as he raised the glass, "here's a speedy end to all your sufferings."

AT IT AGAIN.

THE drawing-room was crowded:

"Oh, I am so pleased to see you, my dear Mrs. Tufthunter—but why have you not brought your charming girl with you?" asked Mrs. Snob (who also had a marriageable daughter).

"Oh, my dear," answered Mrs. Tufthunter, "she's at home answering proposals."

DEATH'S JOKE.

THERE was once a rich man who had a beautiful wife, and she lay a-dying of a cruel disease.

And the rich man sat in the antechamber weeping.

And there was a knock at the door, and before the rich man had even cried "Come in!" Death was half-way across the room:

And the rich man rose and seized him by the shoulder.

"Go away," he said, "and you shall have half my fortune."

And Death answered unto the rich man:

"Keep your money. Those who would bribe me must pay me in kind. If this woman be spared someone else must take her place."

And the rich man said:

"Then why not take one out of the many thousands whom none would miss?"

And to this Death answered: "Good! So be it," and departed:

And the beautiful wife got well, but the rich man sickened of the disease and died:

"FIGHTING CARLILE."

An excellent story is told of Prebendary Carlile, the head of the Church Army.

A very keen advocate of temperance, he was unpopular with the ordinary loafer, and on one occasion a hooligan, in a state of semi-intoxication, struck him in the face. The Prebendary did not hesitate to turn him the other cheek, and his assailant struck him again.

"Now, sir," said Carlile, "I have satisfied my creed," and, flinging off his coat, he found satisfaction in giving the fellow the sound thrashing he deserved.



SOLD AGAIN.

RECENTLY, at one of the large hotels in Bradford, several enthusiastic students of old coins were conversing on their favourite subject.

After discussing the value of certain coins for some time, an old fellow in the corner of the room said he had a coin which bore the image of the Queen's mother-in-law.

The company wouldn't believe it, but the old man persisted, and said he would wager £5 that he could produce it.

"Done!" exclaimed one of them, and the money was staked.

The old man then handed a coin over for their inspection.

"Why," they all shouted, "this is only an ordinary penny!"

"Yes, but you must agree that the head is that of the present Queen's mother-in-law."

And so, of course, the money was fairly won.



WOULDN'T SUIT HIM.

PETITIONER (to lady of the house): "Perhaps, madam, you could get your husband to put his name down upon the roll of our society. The subscription is only £1 for a life-membership."

Lady of House: "What is your society?"

Petitioner (impressively): "The Society for the Repression of Crime."

Lady of House: "I don't think my husband would care to put his name down for any such thing."

Petitioner: "Why not?"

Lady of House: "Because he makes his living by crime."

Petitioner (starting back horrified): "What! Is he a criminal?"

Lady of House: "No; he's a policeman."

PERHAPS IT WAS.

"WHEN I was once in danger from a lion," said an old African explorer, "I tried sitting down and staring at him as I had no weapons."

"How did it work?" asked his companion.

"Perfectly! The lion did not offer to touch me."

"Strange! How do you account for it?"

"Well, sometimes I have thought it was because I sat down on a high branch of a very tall tree."



TAKING COALS TO NEWCASTLE.

On the office table of Sir Alfred Jones, the Liverpool shipping magnate, whose vessels bring to this country enormous quantities of bananas, will always be found a dish of this succulent fruit. It is the custom of Sir Alfred to offer it to a caller when he wishes to signify that the interview is at an end.

One day a young reporter called for some information on behalf of his newspaper. When, after ten seconds' conversation regarding the weather, Sir Alfred's hand was straying towards the banana plate, the reporter took a couple of bananas out of his own pocket.

In the sweetest tones of innocence he said: "Will you have a banana, Sir Alfred?"



USEFUL HAND.

A FARM labourer went to a small shop kept by an old woman, and asked for a "pund o' bacon."

She produced the bacon and cut a piece off, but could not find the pound weight.

"Oh, never mind t' pund weight," said he: "Ma hand just weighs a pund, so put the bacon i' the scales."

The woman confidently placed the bacon into one side of the scales, while the man put his hand into the other side, and, of course, took care to have good weight.

While the woman was wrapping the bacon up the pound weight was found; and, on seeing it, the man said:

"Now, you see if my hand don't weigh just a pund."

The pound weight was accordingly put into one scale, and the man's hand into the other, this time only just to balance. The old woman, on seeing this, said:

"Wha, I niver seed aught so near afore! Here's a red-herrin' for thee honesty, ma son!"

A SIMS REEVES STORY.

SIR WILLIAM TRELOAR lives in the former residence of Mr. Sims Reeves, and tells the following good story of him :

A friend of the singer who was once staying with him at Grange Mount, Sydenham, said to his host :

"You have a pretty place, Reeves, but it looks a bit bare."

"Oh !" answered the great tenor, "that's because all the trees are quite young. I hope they will have grown to a good size before you come and see us again. Then you'll find the place much improved."

And he wondered what it was that caused his friend such amusement !



FOLLOWED INSTRUCTIONS.

At Gloucester, some time ago, a man was sentenced to one month's hard labour for stealing a bottle of medicine that he had been asked to deliver by the doctor of the village in which he lived. Some months after he was brought up on a similar charge, and, when in the dock, was asked what he had to say in his defence.

"Well, your worship," he replied. "I was asked by the doctor to call again for another patient's medicine and the bottle stood on the doctor's desk labeled : 'To be taken as before.'"

He was discharged amid roars of laughter.



NANSEN AND HIS POLE.

WHEN Dr. Nansen visited Leeds, soon after his North Pole expedition, a very amusing incident was witnessed. A large crowd stood outside the station to welcome him, two of his most ardent admirers being a couple of old men who kept waving their sticks and shouting themselves hoarse.

When the celebrated explorer had passed in his carriage, there followed in his wake a waggon dragged by horses, bearing a long iron pole, which belonged to an electric tramways company. Directly the old men saw it, the following conversation took place :

"Well, I'll be blowed, Bill, he's browt t' pole back wi' him !" said one.

"Ay," said the other ; "and we t' only two 'at's noticed it. They're all running after t' carriage, sitha ; they're that ignorant—well, they can't tell t' North Pole when they sees it."

MOTOR STORIES.

Many good stories are told of motorists : Here are some very amusing ones :

In the South of England recently a countryman had the misfortune to be run over by a motor-car. It was not until the wheel had passed over the poor man's leg, and had gone some yards, that the driver shouted :

"Look out !"

The unfortunate man struggled into a sitting posture, and coolly inquired :

"Why, are you come back again ?"

The motor-car was scorching along a country road at something over twenty miles an hour when an honest-eyed old man held up his hand.

"Beggin' your pardon for stoppin' of yer, sir," he observed, as the motorist slowed down, "but if you'll look through these 'ere glasses at that tree yonder, p'raps you'll see why I tuk the liberty."

And, sure enough, through a pair of battered field-glasses the man in oilskins caught sight of a figure perched in the branches of a roadside elm. "You've saved me from a police trap, old friend," he remarked to the rustic. "I'm obliged to you ; there's half-a-crown for your trouble."

When he went past the elm at next door to a crawl he waved his hand airily to the figure above, while an honest-eyed old man half-a-mile back was chortling to himself :

"Shiftin' that scarecrow out o' the pea-field into that there tree worn't 'arf sich a bad move !"

Readers are asked to submit stories of a similar nature to the foregoing, and will be paid for any new and original ones published. Anecdotes must be sent to the Editor, THE NOVEL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than October 4th. Mark your envelope "Motoring" in the top left-hand corner.



CAUGHT IN A FOG.

A GENTLEMAN crossing London Bridge during a fog in a carriage at a foot pace was aroused by a tap at the window :

The glass was dim, and thinking it might be a wayfarer seeking assistance, or a policeman proffering it, he lowered the window and put his head out, whereupon his hat vanished, as, two seconds later did the thief—in the fog.

Many and amusing were the Malaprop Stories received in the recent competition.
Here are some of the best.

NOT THE CURATE.

Two women were talking when a young-looking clergyman passed. One of them said :

"Is that the curate?"

"Oh, no!" replied the other. "That is the *incumbrance* (incumbent) of the parish."

WHAT SHE'D GOT.

SOME short time ago a poor woman was talking about a neighbour, and said :

"Mrs. Smith is very ill with *ammonia* (pneumonia) on the lungs, caught through wearing a *mesmerised* (mercerised) blouse on a cold day."

GLAD TO BE BACK.

A RICH but ignorant lady had been for her first trip across the Channel, and being questioned by a friend as to her voyage, she remarked :

"Oh, yes, I found the air very *embracing* (bracing), but I was glad to set foot on *terra cotta* (*terra firma*) again!"

MANY COMPLAINTS.

AN Irish priest, visiting one of his old women parishioners whose daughter had been threatened with consumption, inquired after the health of mother and daughter.

The old woman replied :

"This mornin' I went to the horspital an' thim doctors say as how me daughter's lungs is very much *informed* (inflamed); an' as for meself, ach shurran, sor! thim there *haricot beans* (varicose veins) in me legs has been mighty bad, an' thim there *ecclesiastical* (elastic) stockings what the doctor give me have done me no good, but have only set up a *tumult* (tumour) in me leg!"

DIFFICULTY IN EATING.

MASTER: "Where's Bill this morning, Tom?"

Tom: "At home, sir; he be in a poor way—he can't *domesticate* (masticate) his grub."

A NEW REMEDY.

A LADY had soiled her new white dress, so took it to the washerwoman and asked her if she could take the stain out:

"Oh, yes, miss," she said, "that will come all right if I put some *harmonium* (ammonia) in the water!"

PURE, BUT DANGEROUS.

A MILEMAN, while serving a customer the other morning, was asked if he could guarantee that the milk was pure:

"Oh, yes!" he replied. "It has been *paralysed* (analysed) by the public *anarchist* (analyst)."

FLATTERING.

AN old woman, meeting the new curate in a country village, said to him :

"Oh, sir, I do like your preaching very much! You are so *fluid* (fluent)."

A NEW DISEASE.

DISTRICT VISITOR: "Well, Mrs. Brown, and how are you to-day?"

Mrs. Brown: "Oh, miss, I do feel that bad. The doctor says I've got the nervous *nobility* (debility)."

HARD ON THE BABY.

A CHARWOMAN was once telling her mistress about a little grand-daughter of whom she was very fond. Among other things she said :

"Oh, ma'am, she's just perfect; no other baby ain't in it, and the mother just *analyses* (idolises) her!"

TO GROW POMATOMS.

IN a certain Nottinghamshire village there lives an old man whose malaprop remarks often cause great amusement. One day, while walking down the street, he was accosted by the squire of the parish with :

"Well, Nayland, I hear your son has started as a market gardener. How is he getting on?"

"Grand, sir," replied the old fellow proudly. "He's just got two new *conservatives* (conservatories) built, and he's going to begin to grow *pomatoms*!" (tomatoes).

CURIOUS POLICY.

ONE day two fellow citizens were discussing the work of the town council, and in the course of his remarks about the extravagance and misuse of public money, one of them said :

"You know, sir, it is their *vaccinating* (vacillating) policy that is at the bottom of it."

"MY BEST STORY."

Guy de Maupassant, the master writer of short stories is, unfortunately, dead, so that it is impossible to obtain his own opinion as to his best story. "*Boule de Suif*" is, of course, his masterpiece from the reader's point of view, but it is a "long" short story. "*The Necklace*," which we publish here, is generally considered to be his finest "short" short story, and I feel that no excuse is necessary for including it in this feature. Guy de Maupassant was born in Normandy in 1850, and served in the Franco-German War. He afterwards entered the realistic school of literature, and his first appearance in print proved him to be indeed a master of the art of short story telling. His works include several novels, many volumes of short stories, and a striking collection of lyrics. He unhappily became insane, and died in an asylum in 1893.

The Necklace.

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

(Translated by Margaret M. R. Carter.)

SHE was one of those pretty and charming girls, by some mistake of destiny, born in a family where everyone had to work for their living. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of being known or understood, loved or wedded by any rich or distinguished man; and so she allowed herself to be married to a small clerk in the public education office.

She was simple, not being able to deck herself out, but as unhappy as a girl fallen from a higher sphere; for women have neither caste nor race, their grace and charm serving them for birth and family. Their native shrewdness, their instinct of elegance, the nimbleness of their wit, are their only hierarchy; these are the things that make the daughters of the people the equals of the greatest ladies of the land.

She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for every sort of daintiness and luxury; she suffered from the poverty of her lodging, the wretchedness of the walls, the worn and threadbare chairs, the ugliness of the hangings. Another woman of her class would not have even noticed these things, but they tortured her and made her indignant.

The sight of the little Breton woman who did what was required for their simple *ménage* awakened in her overwhelming regrets and distracting dreams. She dreamt of silent ante-chambers hung with Oriental tapestries, lighted by tall, bronze candelabra, and of the two big footmen in knee-breeches who sleep in the large arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the stove.

She dreamt of vast rooms furnished with old brocades; of exquisite furniture crowded with priceless articles of vertu; of dainty, perfumed rooms arranged for the five o'clock *causerie* with intimate friends, men who are favourites everywhere, and from whom all women like to receive attention.

When she sat down to dinner before the round table, covered with a three-days-old cloth, opposite to her husband, who exclaimed delightedly when taking off the cover of the soup tureen: "Ah, the good *pot-au-feu*, there is nothing that can beat it!" she dreamt of dainty dinners, of a service of glistening silver, of walls covered with pictures of bygone celebrities, and tapestries of strange birds in the middle of a fairy forest. She dreamt of exquisite dishes served in marvelous vessels, of whispered gallantries listened to with a sphinx-like smile, while eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a *gelinotte*.

She had no pretty dresses, no jewels, nothing—and those were the only things she wanted. She felt she was made for them, she would have liked so much to please, to be envied, fascinating and sought after.

She had one rich friend, a former companion at the Convent school, but she did not wish to visit her any more—she suffered too much afterwards, weeping for days together from chagrin, regret, despair, and grief.

Then one day her husband returned home in great spirits, carrying in his hand a large envelope.

"There," said he, "there is something for you."

She quickly broke open the envelope and drew from it a card printed with these words :

The Minister of Public Education and Mme. George Trampouneau beg M. and Mme. Loisel to do them the honour of spending the evening with them on Monday, January 18th.

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped she would be, she threw the invitation on the table in a temper, saying :

"What do you want me to do with that ?"

"But, my dear," said he, "I thought you would have been pleased ; you never go out, and this is such a capital chance ; I had great difficulty in getting it. Everyone wants one, the invitations are very much sought after, and not many are given to the clerks. You will see all the official world there."

She looked at him irritably, and then said impatiently :

"And what do you suppose I possess that I could wear to a reception like that ?"

"I had not thought of that," he stammered. "Why, the dress you wear to the theatre ; it seems quite nice enough to me." He stopped, amazed and aghast at seeing his wife weeping, and two big tears coursed slowly down her face from the corners of her eyes to her mouth. He stammered : "What is the matter with you ? Whatever is the matter with you ?" But, by a violent effort, she mastered her emotion, and replied in a calm voice, while wiping her wet cheeks :

"Nothing, only I have no suitable dress, and so I cannot go to the reception. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped with clothes than I am."

He was in great distress. After a minute or two :

"Come," said he, "let us see, Mathilde ; how much would a suitable costume cost ? Something quite simple and that would be useful for other occasions."

She considered several minutes, reckoning up and wondering how high a figure she might venture to say without drawing upon herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

At last, in a hesitating voice, she replied :

"I do not know exactly, but I think I can manage it with four hundred francs."

He had turned pale, because he had put away exactly that sum in order to buy a gun, so that he could join a hunting party

the next Summer in the plain of Manterre, with several friends, who were going to shoot larks there on Sundays. However, he agreed, saying : "I will give you the four hundred francs, but be sure to choose a handsome dress."

The night of the *soirée* was approaching, and Mme. Loisel was sad, anxious, and restless ; her dress, however, was ready. Her husband said to her one evening : "What is the matter with you ? How strange you have been for the last three days !" And she replied : "I am so vexed to think I have no jewels at all. I shall look wretched without anything ; after all, I would just as soon not go to the *soirée*."

"You must wear natural flowers," he answered ; "they are very fashionable just at this season. For about ten francs you can buy two or three magnificent roses."

She was not at all convinced.

"No—there is nothing more humiliating than to look poor when you are surrounded by rich women."

But suddenly her husband exclaimed :

"How stupid you are ! Go and find your friend Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels ; you are quite friendly enough with her to do that."

"That is true," said she with great delight. "I never thought of it."

The next day she visited her friend and told her about her distress.

Madame Forestier went towards her wardrobe with folding glass doors, took out of it a large coffer, brought it to her, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel :

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first bracelets, then a collar of pearls, then a Venetian cross made of gold and precious stones, of an exquisite workmanship. She tried on the jewels before the glass, not being able to make up her mind to leave them :

"Have you nothing more ?" she asked her friend.

"Yes, of course I have, but I do not know what you would like best."

All at once Madame Loisel discovered in a black satin box a superb diamond necklace. Her heart began to beat with an overwhelming desire ; her hands trembled as she took it ; she fastened it round her neck over her high dress, and stood looking at herself in a kind of ecstasy ; then she said hesitatingly and with great trepidation :

"Would you lend me this—nothing but this ?"

"Of course, I will."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, embraced her with rapture, and then rushed away with her treasure.

* * * * *

The day of the reception arrived, Madame Loisel was a great success, she was the belle of the evening—elegant, gracious, smiling, and quite delirious with joy. Every man in the room was looking at her, inquiring her name, trying to be introduced to her. All the attachés of the Cabinet wanted to dance with her, and even the Minister noticed her.

She danced with abandonment and passion, intoxicated with pleasure, not thinking of anything in the triumph of her beauty and the glory of her success, moving in a sort of cloud of happiness, which was produced by all this homage and admiration, by all these awakened desires, and this victory, so complete and so sweet to every woman's heart.

She left about four o'clock in the morning. Since midnight her husband had been sleeping in a little, deserted *salon* with three other gentlemen, whose wives were having a good time and enjoying themselves very much. He enveloped her shoulders with the wraps that he had brought for her to wear going home; they were the plain, humble wraps of everyday life, and their poverty made a great contrast to the elegance of the ball dress. She noticed it, and wished to get away quickly in order that the other women in their rich furs should not also notice it. Loisel tried to keep her back.

"Do wait a little while," he said; "you will certainly catch cold outside. I will go and call a cab." But she would not listen, and rapidly began to descend the staircase.

When they reached the street they could not find a carriage, and they had to look about for one, calling to the coachmen that they saw passing in the distance.

They went down towards the Seine shivering and in despair: At last they found, on the quay, one of those old night *coupés* that one only sees in Paris after dark; apparently they are too much ashamed of their shabbiness to appear during the day.

It took them to their door in the "Rue des Martyrs," and they slowly climbed up to their lodging.

For her, all was over, and for him, he was thinking that he had to be at the office at ten o'clock.

She took off the wrappings round her shoulders, standing before the looking-glass in order to see herself once more in all

her glory; but, suddenly, she uttered a piercing cry—the necklace was no longer round her neck!

Her husband, already half-undressed, said:

"What is the matter with you?"

She turned towards him almost out of her mind.

"I have—I have—I have lost Madame Forestier's necklace——"

He sat up aghast.

"What! Heavens! How can it possibly be lost?"

And they looked in the folds of the dress, the mantle, everywhere; they could not find it.

"Are you sure that you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, "I remember touching it in the hall at the Minister's house."

"But, if you lost it in the street, surely we ought to have heard it drop. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, that is possible. Did you take the number?"

"No; did you not notice it either?"

"No," and they looked at each other overwhelmed; then Loisel dressed himself again.

"I will go and look carefully along the streets where we walked, to see if I cannot find it," he said.

He went out, and she sank back into a chair just as she was in her ball costume, crestfallen, without strength to go to bed, without fire, without thought. Her husband returned about seven o'clock; he had found nothing.

Afterwards he went to the police-station, to the newspaper offices, to advertise a reward; to the carriage companies; in fact, to every place where the slightest hope of success occurred to him. She waited all day in the same state of bewilderment, trying to realise this frightful disaster.

Loisel came back in the evening, his face pale and haggard; he had found nothing.

"You must write to your friend," said he, "and say that you have accidentally broken the clasp of the necklace, and that you are having it repaired. At all events, that will give us time to look round."

She wrote as he dictated. At the end of a week they had lost all hope, and Loisel, who had aged several years, declared that they must set about replacing it.

The next day they took the box, in which it had been placed, and went to the jeweler

whose name they found printed inside it. He consulted his books.

"I did not sell this necklace, madam; the box alone was bought here," he said.

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, trying to remember what it was like, both of them feeling quite ill from grief and anxiety.

At last in a shop in the Palais Royal they discovered a diamond necklace which appeared to them exactly the same as the one they had lost. It was valued at 40,000 francs; it might be bought for 36,000. They then begged the jeweler not to sell before three days, and they made a condition, that he would take it back for 34,000 if the first one was found before the end of February.

Loisel possessed 18,000 francs that his father had left him. He determined to borrow the rest. He solicited loans everywhere, begging 1000 francs from one, 5 cents from another, 5 louis here, 5 louis there. He took up bills, entered into ruinous liabilities, had transactions with usurers and all the race of moneylenders.

He compromised himself to the end of his existence, risking his signature without even knowing if he could redeem it honourably, and, frightened by the anguish of the future, which seemed to be going to crush him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures which he knew were in store for him, he went to fetch the new necklace and deposited on the jeweler's desk 36,000 francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace to Madame Forestier, the latter said to her rather crossly:

"You ought to have returned it to me sooner; I might have wanted to wear it."

She did not open the box, as her friend had feared. Supposing she had noticed the substitution, what would she have thought or said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

Madame Loisel had now to make acquaintance with the horrible life of the needy. With great heroism she took her stand at once. It was necessary to pay this horrible debt; very well, she would pay it. They sent away the maid, they changed their lodging and lived in an attic under the tiles; she experienced the real hard work of house-keeping, the odious labour in the kitchen.

She cleaned the plates and dishes, wearing out her pink nails on the greasy earthenware and the bottoms of the saucepans. She washed the dirty linen, shirts and dish-

cloths, afterwards drying them on a line.

Every morning she had to take down the sweepings into the street, and bring up the water for the day's consumption, stopping to take her breath at every landing. Then, dressed as a working woman, her basket on her arm, she went round to the greengrocer, the grocer, and the butcher, bargaining, beating down the tradespeople, reluctantly parting with her few miserable coins sou by sou.

It was necessary each month to pay bills, renew others, and so obtain time.

The husband worked in the evening fair-copying a merchant's accounts, and often at night he did copying at five sous the page.

And this life lasted ten years. At the end of ten years they had refunded everything, with the moneylender's charges, and the accumulation of interest upon them.

Madame Loisel appeared now to be quite old. She had become the typical strong, hard, rough woman of poor working households, with her hair badly dressed, her skirts all awry, her hands red, talking loudly, and washing the boards with great splashing of water, but sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat a while near the window, and thought of that *soirée* years ago, that ball where she had been so beautiful and so much admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Ah, who knows? Who knows? How strange is life, and what changes happen to one! What a very small thing may prove your undoing or your salvation!

* * * * *

Now, it happened that one Sunday as Madame Loisel was taking a turn in the Champs Elysées to refresh herself after the toils of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young and beautiful, attractive and fascinating.

Madame Loisel was troubled; should she go and speak to her? Yes, certainly she would do so, and now that she had paid everything she would tell her friend all. Why not? She went up to her.

"Good morning, Jeanne!"

The other did not recognise her at all, and was astonished at being spoken to so familiarly by such a common-looking woman.

"But—madam," she stammered, "you must be making a mistake."

"No—I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde, but how changed you are!"

"Yes, I have lived through some hard times since I saw you last, and I have had a great deal of trouble, and all because of you!"

"Of me! What do you mean by that?"

"You must remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to wear at the Minister's reception?"

"Yes—well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"But—what can you mean? Why, you returned it to me."

"I bought you another exactly like it, and for ten years we have been paying for

it. Of course, you can understand that it was not exactly easy for us, who had nothing. At last, however, everything is settled, and I am heartily glad."

Madame Forestier had stopped.

"What," said she, "do you mean to say that you have bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. Ah, you did not discover it was a different one, did you?—they were so exactly alike," and she smiled in a naïve kind of way.

Madame Forestier, terribly distressed, took both her hands.

"Ah, my poor Mathilde," she said, "but mine was *false*; it was not worth more than 5000 francs at the very most."

A Faded Rose.

By KATE PATCH.

A mother's discovery, and what it led to.

WHEN bullet or sword-thrust hushes the breath of one upon the field of battle the heart of some woman is also wounded. An enemy's bullet sank into Surgeon Dunbar's brain as he leant over the soldier he was trying to succour, and two in the Homeland felt the stinging smart. One was his mother, the other was younger.

Gilbert Dunbar had offered his services, as did many another man, for the sake of the experience it might bring. There was a dash of patriotism in his resolve, no doubt; there was the young man's love for action and adventure; and then Fate had been slow in bringing him the fame he was sure he deserved, and youth dislikes to wait.

The one thing which made him hesitate in any way was perhaps the chief cause of his final decision after all. He had fallen in love, and all the blood of his Scotch ancestors throbbed in a foolish pride which bade him keep silence until he had more to offer than the great love of his fresh, young heart.

His mother had bidden him farewell with mingled pride and grief, clinging to his assurance that there was small danger to be faced by an Army surgeon; that doubtless there would be no fighting, anyway. But

there was another whose unspoken fears he could not silence, and he turned away from the wistful questioning of her grey eyes, closing his lips in mistaken honour and unconscious cruelty upon the words which sprang to them.

Neither woman saw him again: His still, young body was brought home to the mother, and she watched it laid away on the grassy hill-slope beside his father's. There were many there to do honour to the ardent soul cut off in its fair young manhood; there were flowers and tender words, warm hand-clasps, and human tears; these for the mother's solace.

It was hard enough to feel that her son could never fulfil the career she had dreamt of for him; harder still, perhaps, that she should never see his children playing at her feet—and yet, he was all hers now. There was no other with whom she must share his love. He was safe, too, for had he not laid down his life for another? And she herself was fast growing old. Not many years of loneliness lay between this day and her own home-going. That was her one comfort.

But one day they brought home the small trunk he had taken with him, and painfully,

tenderly she smoothed out the clothes which her care had made ready for him.

There was the work-box, too, which she had prepared—for the lad's clothes were ever in need of mending—and it had been used, she observed, lifting the lid tremblingly. He had found it useful—not merely a mother's notion.

She remembered how he had stood over her, making affectionate sport of her preparations—all to lighten her foreboding heart, she knew.

Then there was the Bible which he had first read at her knee—the little, worn volume which she had given him on his seventh birthday.

"Honour thy father and thy mother"—that was the text at which it opened. Ah, he had been a good son; none could gainsay that.

And next the Bible—

His mother suddenly closed the little trunk. She had found a girl's name and a faded flower.

Then he was not all hers? There had been another dweller in that brave, young heart? Somewhere another woman missed the sunshine of his eyes?

Nay, it was only a lad's fancy, a bit of youthful folly; his mother had always come first; he was her boy; her little lad—all hers! She would not heed that crumbling rose.

And, in truth, she did almost forget it.

She now lived alone in the old house, and her days were spent in dreaming of the past while doing her daily tasks. Each evening, as the Summer slowly waned, she walked to the old graveyard, carrying fresh flowers for her boy. Sometimes a neighbour came to talk with her for a while, but her life was, for the most part, lived alone with the memories of days gone by.

One late September afternoon she sat by her favourite window; her work had fallen into her lap, and she was living over again that distant day when her little Gilbert had asked her to make him a soldier's cap, and, shouldering a wooden gun, had marched gallantly off to war. The mother was smiling though her eyes were dim, when suddenly a shadow fell across the doorway and she looked up.

Before her stood a girl but little more than twenty, though there was that in her deep grey eyes which told of the trouble rather than the joy of youth. Her soft hair was rolled loosely back from a low brow, leaving only a little curl or two above the temples. The loose folds of her riding-habit were

gathered in one slim hand with her whip and gloves.

"Is this his mother?"

The voice was low and pleading. As the elder woman looked up and saw the suffering in the young eyes her heart beat faster.

"My boy!" she whispered to herself, and then rose to meet her guest. "Yes, lassie, I am his mother, and—and you—"

She looked up with mute questioning in her eyes. The girl gently pushed her back into the chair and sank on her knees beside it.

"I am the woman who loved him," she whispered, her fair face burning crimson, "and, oh, I have come so far to ask you—his mother—if he loved *me*!"

The mother of Gilbert Dunbar had drawn back at the first words. In the newness of her hurt it was hard to share his love with another—that love which she had called all her own; but now she turned in bewildered surprise and looked down into the half-ashamed, eager eyes.

The girl's soft riding-hat had fallen back, and the store of loving sympathy in her heart made the woman lean forward with a sudden motherly impulse and rest her trembling hand upon the waving hair. At the gentle touch quick tears sprang to the grey eyes, and Margaret Dunbar's own eyes were dim. Ah, she could afford to be generous. Was she not his mother? And this sweet girl had loved him—well, that was not strange. He was worthy the love of any woman.

"Did he not tell you, lassie?" she faltered at last, in answer to that impulsive question:

"No"—and the face flushed crimson again: "No, he didn't tell me, but—but—I was very sure—until he went away. Then—oh, my heart! I was not so sure. And, oh, it was hard!"

She bowed her head on the arm of his mother's chair, and that gentle hand still rested on her soft hair. Suddenly the eyes were raised again:

"Will you forgive me for coming here?" she cried. "Oh, you must not think me unmaidenly. I had to come. You see, when it reached us—the dreadful news—I thought I should go mad. You are his mother and you could weep before the world, but I had to hide my grief. He had never told me, you see. I could not say to even my nearest: 'My heart is breaking'—because—because—why should I be so grieved just for the loss of a friend? He had never given me the right to call him more—but I know—I sometimes think," she

rushed on incoherently, "I could bear it all if only I were sure. If I had the right to say even to myself: 'He loved me,' I think I could somehow lift my head with pride and go on to that far-off end knowing that he was with me—but he did not say the words, though I was so sure, so sure I read them in his eyes."

"He was a proud lad ever," began the mother painfully; "no doubt he felt that it would not be right to fetter you when he was so young and poor. Alas! a good man never knows how a woman longs to be fettered."

"Silence is cruel," the girl cried passionately. "All the Summer this suspense has been eating at my heart, and to-day when I started out for my ride I looked over to the rim of blue hills that lies between my home and this. I remembered how he used to point to them and tell me that over in the valley beyond lived his mother in the grey old house which had sheltered him in his happy boyhood. I always loved to hear him speak so of that home and of you, and this afternoon in my loneliness the thought came to me: 'I will go over beyond the hills; I will find his mother, and I shall not be afraid to speak to her.' I knew you would forgive me because I loved him, and I know you can answer my question. They say a mother always knows when her son loves another; and I am sure it must be true. I know if I had a little son I could read his every thought. So I've come all this way just to ask you—though it makes my face burn so—just to ask you if Gilbert loved me as, please God, I shall love him for ever and ever."

Margaret Dunbar looked down into those strained, eager eyes, and the tears rolled slowly over her faded cheeks. The passionate pleading had drawn her heart to her lips and no remnant of the mother's hurt was left there.

"My child," she said, "my poor child, I will tell you all I know. Gilbert said no word to me. It was not his way to speak his deepest thoughts even to me, his mother; but the lad was restless—I knew that long before he went away. Sometimes when he came home his eyes shone in such a way that I mistrusted a lass had lighted them, but again they were full of trouble."

She paused a moment, and went on more slowly:

"He said no word to me, but——"

"Yes, but——" whispered the girl eagerly:

"But they sent me home a little package

of his things—afterwards—his clothes, and the Bible I gave him, a picture or two, and—and a sheet of music. It was a song——"

"A song?"

"And with a woman's name written across the front; and, dear, when I opened the leaves a little faded rose fell into my lap; that is all I know."

"And have you those things now?" The girl had sprung to her feet in pitiful haste.

"Yes, child, I kept them because they were his, though it hurt me—I will be honest in what I say. It seemed to tell of a secret kept from me. Mothers are jealous souls, dear, and when a man keeps a faded rose and his mother finds it she knows that his heart has grown beyond her keeping. Will you forgive me, lassie?"

The girl raised the worn hands to her lips. "Oh, will you let me see that rose?" she cried.

The mother left her chair and opened the door of an old cabinet. On one shelf lay the roll of music for which the girl so eagerly held out her hand. She seized it with a little sob of joy and pain, and sank down on a low seat near the window.

"Yes, yes," she said, "it is my song, and the rose"—she pressed the faded petals to her lips—"oh, I remember so well, so well: It was two nights before he went away—he came to see me and he asked me to sing this for him. It was his favourite of all my songs. When I had done he took the music from my hands so gently, and he said: 'You will let me keep it?' I—I was almost crying, so I could not look at him, but I let him keep it. Then he started up suddenly and said he must go, and his lips were set firmly and he was very pale, and I knew by the way my heart sank that he would go away without saying the words I could not help wanting to hear him say. I only saw him once more, and there were others there: As he came to bid me good-bye the rose I held fell at his feet, and he stooped quickly and picked it up, and when he thought no one was looking he hid it in his breast; but, oh, I saw him do it! And then—then he went away from me, and I never saw his face again!"

As the girl had run on, talking half to herself, his mother stood by and trembled as she listened. Now, as the young face was suddenly hidden, she slowly drew near and leant against the window as though it were hard for her to stand.

"Lassie," she said gently, "my child,

listen—it is his mother who speaks. Be comforted, for the lad loved you.”

Instantly a pair of arms crept about the old neck, and the face of the woman Gilbert Dunbar had loved lay hidden upon his mother's breast. Neither cared to speak for many moments. Then the girl raised her eyes to the gentle ones above her.

“You will let me take them with me—the rose and the song?” she whispered. “You do not need them—you have so much: You are his mother; the whole world knows that he loved you and that you love him. But the world can never know my secret—he did not will it should be so; and because he did not speak I must keep it for ever locked in my own heart. You will let me have this little for my comfort?”

For answer Margaret Dunbar laid the treasures in her hands. Then suddenly she rose and pushed her guest gently into a chair. The time-honoured habits of her life, hushed for the moment by the shock of this meeting, were reasserting themselves.

“Dear heart,” she said, “sit there and rest while I make you a cup of tea. To think you should come so far to see me—Gilbert's mother—and that I should forget my manners!”

The girl leant back and closed her eyes, conscious at last of her weariness. How often she had dreamt of coming to his mother, but, oh, on such a different errand; a woman's heart ever goes out in special yearning towards the mother of the man she loves. But she had not thought to come alone. And how different it all was from what she had dreamt.

Margaret Dunbar was a tender woman: She knew what the bruised heart needed, and as her guest sipped the tea she sat by and talked quietly of Gilbert, of his childhood and youth, of his brief young manhood, finding balm for her own heartache so:

She even brought out the few treasured baby pictures and a little dress he had once

worn, and she led the way up a narrow old staircase opening from the kitchen, to gaze at the small room where the boy had lived and dreamt. The tears of the women who loved him fell all the while, but a peace beyond words had fallen upon their hearts.

“And now,” said the mother gently at last—“and now you will want to go up yonder—to the churchyard on the hillside.”

The girl laid her hand on her heart for an instant. “Yes, yes, I must go there,” she whispered.

So together they went up the sunny slope and through the old white gate, and at length they paused beside his grave. The mother busied herself tending the flowers, but the girl stood looking down; then she stooped and laid her cheek against the cool stone.

“Dear grave, you hide the hands I loved, the face, the eyes—but, oh, *he* is not here!” And she lifted her gaze to the sky above. “I have him with me always wherever I go, though his mother has his grave,” she whispered to herself, caressing the grassy mound.

The sun was near its setting when they came down the hillside path again. Neither spoke until they reached the gate-post where the restless pony whinnied impatiently for his mistress. Then the girl turned and silently kissed the sweet old face beside her. “I shall love you always,” she said.

“And will you not come again?” asked the mother, holding the young hand lingeringly.

“Perhaps—if you want me to come. The skies can never be so grey again because I came to you to-day.” She sprang upon her horse and turned to go; then she leant forward suddenly.

“You are sure?” she whispered. “You are quite sure?”

“Yes, I am sure,” was the trembling reply; “I, his mother, am sure; and, lassie, I am glad!”



Books in Brief. * * *

The gist of a novel in the form of a short story—that is our idea of a popular review. Our selection this month comprises: (1) "What Became of Pam," by the clever American writer, Baroness von Hutten, and (2) "In Subjection," by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, who became the rage when she published her first novel, "Concerning Isabel Carnaby," the principal characters in which are introduced into this, her latest work.

WHAT BECAME OF PAM. * * *

* * * By the BARONESS VON HUTTEN.

(Wm. Heinemann. 6s.)

I.

PAM was very poor, but with plenty of aristocratic friends from whom she had hidden herself because of her love for a man who was now married. This man, James Peele, had been looking forward to a great political career. If he married beautiful Pam (her father and mother still made love to one another in far Japan, and did not trouble themselves about her) his career would be ruined. And although he loved Pam, over whom he had an irresistible influence, the world was too much with him, and he married someone else.

Proud Pam came to London and carefully hid herself from all her friends. Her one wish in the world was never to see James Peele again. She dreaded the sight of him, for she had loved him with all the power of her passionate nature; and when Pam loved, she threw her whole soul into it. If Peele saw her, he would love her again; and then Pam would find her bitter path still more difficult.

Meantime, she worked away at writing "penny dreadfuls," and managed to extract a little colour out of life, in spite of her drab surroundings. And where this story begins, it was her twenty-seventh birthday; and Pam awoke to the fact on the third floor of a Bloomsbury boarding-house.

II.

WHEN Pam went out that morning she met a former lover, whom she did not wish to recognise her. But it was too late: he declined to leave her, for he was still very much in love with her. At last Pam eluded him, doubled through the Burlington

Arcade, and saw her dear friend the Duchess of Wight.

With one spring Pam reached the carriage, tore open the door, and was borne away sitting helplessly in the Duchess' lap:

"Pam!" said the Duchess. "How you frightened me! What was it?"

"Ratty Maxse. He has been chasing me to find out my address."

The Duchess took her home: "You're going to stay to lunch with me, Pam."

Pam shook her head. "I can't stay, dear Duchess."

"But you are not going to disappear again? Pam—I am old and lonely, and I always loved you."

Pam compromised, and agreed to come to the Duchess occasionally. Then she went home.

III.

PAM wanted to pawn a ring. Her old nurse, the companion of her flight, had been ill, and there was the doctor to pay. As Pam turned away from the pawnbroker's she met a man whom she had momentarily seen in the fog the day she had left the Duchess' house. Their glances crossed:

One day in Spring she met him again: He had recognised her as soon as he saw her, and while she tried to look as though she had never before seen him, he took off his hat, and said quietly: "I have not seen you for a long time."

Before she could summon up an appropriate answer, he went on: "The first time was in a beastly fog in Berkeley Square, and the second at Cornwall's, where you were pawning a ring. I am Jean de Lensky, of the Russian Embassy, and a friend of the Duchess of Wight. You will let me know your name?"

"Pamela Yeoland—Miss Yeoland."

He laughed: "Ah, yes, Miss, of course! I knew that!"

"Did you? How?"

"How can I tell! You know the Duchess of Wight well? I was on my way to lunch with her that foggy day."

They had turned and were going slowly back to Old Dean's Yard. Before he left Pam, he had asked for her address and noted it down: "At what time shall I be likely to find you?" he asked.

"After five, almost any day."

"Thanks! Then—*au plaisir*."

Gravely they shook hands, and separated. And that was the beginning of De Lensky's love for Pam:

IV:

EVER since relying upon her own exertions as a means of livelihood, Pam had found it difficult to make both ends meet. There was always her elderly nurse to provide for, in addition to her own wants. But one day Pam's difficulties were ended by an old friend of hers in a miraculous manner. And as she read his letter she was profoundly moved:

"Melbourne, August 1," said the letter. "MY DEAR PAM,—I have got Bright's disease, and am going to die. Many men would have tried again in my place, but I knew that your 'no' meant 'no,' and so I never bothered you."

"By the time this letter reaches you I shall be dead, and I am leaving you my house in Westminster just behind the Abbey, and enough money to run it comfortably. I hope you will live in the house, sometimes at least. . . . It's wonderful how clearly I remember every little incident connected with you, and every word you ever said to me. Good-bye, Pam. I loved you then, and I love you still, somehow. Think of me sometimes, if you don't mind. God bless you."

"CHARNLEY BURKE."

V:

WHEN De Lensky proposed to Pam she was troubled, for in her hearts of hearts she liked him very much. But she had met her former lover, Peele—the man who had preferred politics to her—and knew that he still retained his influence over her. So that when De Lensky came and asked her to be his wife, she was afraid.

"You like me so much that you would soon learn to love me," said De Lensky.

"It is that which is worrying me," said Pam. "I don't love him; I give you my word I don't, but I did love him, and I am afraid of seeing him. He—he charmed me—his eyes—his manner—and if I live in London I shall have to see him."

"I accept all the risks. Marry me," said De Lensky.

"If you don't love me very much," she answered, "I might; but if you did—it would be dreadful!"

She looked at him, meeting his earnest eyes. "I have told you all about it," she said slowly; "and—if you still do really want me, I will."

VI.

THEN Pam met Peele again, and the old influence reasserted itself. She felt that she could not marry De Lensky, for she was too fond of him to make him miserable. She broke off her engagement with him, and at the same time tried to avoid Peele. Then Peele's wife died, and Pam was bidden to the funeral. And it was at the funeral that her deliverance came, for, looking up, she saw Peele's face:

But that was not his face, the face of her dreams. That was the face of a middle-aged man with a reddish nose and ugly lines round his eyes. This man who stood in Peele's place was a weak, inert-looking person, with discontent and self-indulgence, and even pomposity written all over him.

Her tribute to Peele's memory was a slow, painful, shamed blush, that seemed to burn her whole body. Then she drew a deep breath: She was free. The man she had loved, to all intents and purposes, was dead.

VII:

ON her way back to the old house at Westminster, Pam saw De Lensky, and made her cabman pull up. De Lensky got into the cab, and she told him that she no longer loved Peele: "I want you," she added. "I have been so lonely."

"Loneliness is not enough for marriage: I am not an old woman, Pam, and I love you."

Her heart was beating wildly as she answered: "And I love you. I didn't know, because it is so different; but I do love you."

"I shall not be content with the kind of love you give the Duchess of Wight, I am afraid, Pam."

She hesitated. "You needn't be afraid any longer. Peele was first, and I shall never forget it; but of all people in the world I love you best, and—you may love me as much as you like! I never thought it would be like this."

Without a word he took her in his arms, and, for the first time, kissed her.

IN SUBJECTION.

By ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER.

(Hutchinson & Co. 6s.)

I.

IN the drawing-room of a house on the north side of Prince's Gardens a man and a woman were seated one Winter's evening after dinner.

"It seems to me," Isabel Seaton suddenly remarked, "that single life is like a road, and married life is like a garden."

"As how?" asked her husband.

"Single life is like a road, because it is always leading on to something else. And the garden is all that the road is not and never can be—peaceful and guarded and final and secure."

"What is the particular new toy you want just now for your garden?"

"A girl—an Anglo-Indian girl."

"What for?"

"To instruct, amuse, and entertain her, and finally get her married."

"You must remember, Isabel, that she probably will not look at life through your eyes. Invite your little Indian girl, but don't be disappointed if she doesn't turn out to be as absolutely adorable as you are yourself."

Thus it was settled that Fabia Vipart should come to stay with the Seaton.

II.

A NATIVE gentleman dressed in European costume was sitting alone in the drawing-room of an Indian bungalow. Presently the swish of silken skirts was heard, and Fabia Vipart entered the room:

"Good morning, Ram Chandar. I have something to tell you. I am going away to England. I am weary of the life here."

"You had far better stay here. I love you, Fabia; you are part of my very soul."

"I cannot marry you, Ram Chandar. If I marry, I should like to marry a big, strong Englishman with a shallow little soul."

III.

FABIA'S visit to England was a far greater disappointment to herself than it was to her hostess.

"You should marry," remarked Isabel one afternoon: "You'd find it the only permanently amusing entertainment."

Fabia smiled. "So you want me to marry that stupid Captain Gaythorne?"

"He adores you, and he'd be an excellent husband."

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IV.

IN a new and hideous vicarage, in a new and hideous suburb of London, dwelt the Rev. Gabriel Carr.

"I am going to have tea with Gabriel Carr this afternoon," said Isabel to her guest: "Will you come with me?"

"Certainly. I shall be immensely interested to see Mr. Carr in that home of his own which you have assured me is so unfit a casket for the jewel it contains."

V.

WHEN Gabriel and his guests returned to the vicarage from St. Etheldreda's, Fabia sat down to the piano and began to sing: Because she sang like an angel, Carr believed that she was in truth an angel. Therefore, as soon as he heard her voice, he loved her.

It was an intense joy to Gabriel to find that he and Fabia would spend Whitsuntide together at Vernacre. One Sunday afternoon they were sitting in the garden.

"Miss Vipart," Gabriel began, "I have something to say to you, but I was not at all sure that you wanted to hear it."

"Ah?"

"I ask you the greatest of all favours that a man can ask a woman—I ask you to be my wife."

Fabia hesitated, then spoke: "Yes, I will marry you," she said, "but only on one condition."

"And what is it, my dearest?"

"That you will give up being a clergyman and come abroad with me."

"Fabia!" he cried. "You have insulted me, and defied the God Whom I serve. All is over between us." He turned and left her.

Fabia felt hurt and lonely. Gabriel's rebuff had left her sore and wounded: He would never marry her now; Charlie Gaythorne would; so she decided to accept Charlie.

VI.

WHEN Janet Field's father died, she was adopted by Gabriel Carr's mother; and, as the years went on, fell in love with Gabriel.

After his return from Vernacre, Gabriel stayed on at his mother's, but did not gain strength as he expected. "I cannot think what has come to me," he said to Janet, as they were walking in the fields one day.

"I can," was the prompt reply: "You

have been doing too much for years; and now the bill has come in and you have nothing to pay it with."

Gabriel learnt from his physician that if he wished to live he must resign the living of St. Etheldreda's and take a country parish. He could not tell Janet of his new-born love for her now that he had neither home nor income; but Janet was quite clever enough to see what had come to pass, and to be thankful accordingly.

Thus Gabriel went on his way, and the angels of God met him in the form of Janet Field and Mrs. Gaythorne, who presented him with the living of Gaythorne. So he went forward rejoicing.

Gabriel had not long been appointed Rector of Gaythorne when he married Janet Field, and the newly-wedded pair went South for their honeymoon in order to catch the last flutter of Autumn's skirts before she faded into Winter.

One night Gabriel went out. A fog rose up on the moor. Janet sat up all night, alternately crying and praying.

Next morning the fog cleared, search-parties were organised; not a trace of the missing man could they find. Janet's agony was almost more than she could bear.

VII.

EARLY in the Spring, a sensation was created in the fashionable world by an Oriental occultist who set up in a small flat in Mount Street—a Dr. Mukharji. He told fortunes, consulted crystals, and generally comported himself after the manner of his kind.

Many silly women were led captive by the strange devices of the occultist; but none attended his rooms in Mount Street with such frequency and regularity as Fabia Gaythorne. When scandal began to be busy with her name, Isabel Seaton broke through her rule and interfered.

"I've got something rather horrid to say to you, Fabia. You are going too often to see that cousin of yours, Ram Chandar Mukharji. People are talking about you."

"Let them talk!"

And Isabel's hint to Fabia was of no avail.

VIII.

CAPTAIN GAYTHORNE was intensely unhappy. A visit to Paris, tactfully suggested by Isabel, had done no permanent good. As soon as Fabia returned to London, her visits to Mount Street became as frequent and prolonged as ever. The only course

open to Charlie was to go to Dr. Mukharji and tell the charlatan what he thought of him—with a horsewhip.

It was not long before Charlie put this idea into execution. Another hansom overtook him; out of that hansom stepped Fabia.

She did not stop to ring the bell, but opened the door by means of a latch-key and went in. Then Charlie saw red.

After a turn or two his frenzy of rage subsided enough for him to send in his card, and he took care to follow it closely. He also kept his whip in his hand.

"I haven't come here for any infernal palaver!" Charlie said. "I've come to tell you I won't stand any more of your nonsense."

The occultist shook from head to foot with sheer fear. "Surely, you're not going to beat me with that thing!" he pleaded.

"But I am." Charlie seized his enemy by the throat. But before he had time to fulfil his intention, the slender figure collapsed altogether, leaving in Charlie's hands a tangled mass of false black hair and beard. At his feet lay the unconscious form of his wife, Fabia Gaythorne!

The real Mukharji she had never heard of since she left India.

IX.

FABIA, after her recovery, appreciating her husband's newly-discovered strength of character, became his abject slave and adorer.

In the middle of August Janet's baby was born, and a measure of happiness came to her. One bitterly cold evening, early in the new year, she suddenly heard the door-bell ring.

On the doorstep stood her husband.

Then Gabriel told his story. Stumbling over the moor in the fog, he came upon a hut which also contained an uninviting-looking man in convict clothes. The man attacked him, and when morning broke Gabriel was discovered by the prison warders, dressed in prison garb and with the convict's distinguishing mark tattooed on his shoulder. This resulted in Gabriel being taken to the prison and having to serve the rest of the convict's term:

"And you served the rest of his sentence?" asked Janet.

"Yes, I served the rest of his sentence, with the additional punishment that his escape entailed; and God was with me all the time."

Thus the year which the locust had eaten, was returned to Janet.

The Flower o' Glen Cairne.

By J. PLATEN DENOVAN.

The story of "a lass who loved a sailor."

LOCH-NA-CAIRNE, seen from that point popularly known as the Queen's View, surely never looked lovelier than it did this particular morning in early September.

The rich woods cast a mantle of green over the rising slopes and merge in the dark forests of Atholl beyond. Here and there a silver fir catches the sunlight, and the crimsoning beech stands side by side with the light green of the hazel. Schiehallion rears its towering height against the cloudless blue of the sky, and duplicates itself in the deep, placid waters of the loch.

The river plays hide-and-seek in its onward course, now sparkling in the light, then under overhanging bushes, reappearing and kissing the heather on the low-lying ground, now tumbling among the boulders and shallowing over pebbles, exposing here and there a bank of glistening, golden sand.

This is the prospect that lies opened up before the eyes of Jessie Macdonald, the "Flower o' Glen Cairne." Yet she has seen it before; from her childhood she has lived in its midst, with never a care but the thought of having to stop her play and take up her school tasks for the morrow.

She sits there now, viewing the same scene, with the same eyes, but with the soul of a woman.

Her hands are weaving a posy of wild flowers gathered by the way. Bending over them her profile is perfect, and the full, rosy lips, parted in a smile, disclose teeth of pearly whiteness.

Is she thinking of her lovers? Harken to her voice, rich and clear, as she sings a favourite song of Claribel:

Oh, many a time I am sad at heart,
And I haven't a word to say,
And I keep from the lassies and lads apart,
In the meadows a-making hay.
But Willie will bring me the first wild rose
In my new sun-bonnet to wear;
And Robin will wait at the keeper's gate,
For he follows me everywhere.
But I tell them they needn't come wooing to me,
For my heart, my heart, is over the sea;
But I tell them they needn't come wooing to me,
For my heart, my heart, is over the sea.

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A joyous voice as it first rings out, but it breaks down in a sob, the under lip quivers, and the soft, grey eyes are shadowed beneath their wet lashes. Her brave sailor lad, her sweetheart Jack, sailed away to foreign parts, and his ship is long overdue, and never a word comes to the Glen to relieve her aching heart.

And at night, when the river rushes down in flood, dashing over the rocks with an angry roar, and the wind moans among the restless trees, she fancies she hears the voice of Jack calling for help where no help is near.

"But I'll no' despair," she says, rising swiftly to her feet, "I'll no' give in yet." And, brushing away the tears with a show of renewed courage, and thrusting the flowers in the belt round her waist, she wends her way towards her father's cottage at Glen Cairne.

"Jessie! Is that you, my lass; bide till I get ower the fence, I want to speak wi' you."

The speaker was Hector Fraser, a well-to-do farmer, locally known as the Laird o' Baldreggan. He was a short, thick-set man, with a good-natured, clean-shaven face. About the age of fifty-four, he had never married, and his sister, who had kept house for him, having recently died, the "folk" were saying that he was on the look-out for a wife "to sit at his table-head."

"You'll no' have much to say, laird," she cried back, "for it's near Crumpie's milkin' time."

Hector was a little lame, and his step seemed even more laboured than usual as he came forward, a newspaper in one hand, his spectacles in the other.

"Lassie! Lassie! I will have bad news"—thrusting out the paper—"and my very hert is sick to be tellin' you, but the sooner it's telt the better."

Jessie dropped the bundle of sticks and clasped her trembling hands, piteously exclaiming:

"Wae's me, wae's me! I saw a magpie sittin' by itsel', and I knew there would be sorrow comin'. It's aboot Jack; tell me, dinna keep me in suspense. Oh, the misery o't!"

"You're right, lassie, his ship has been wracked about the Spanish coast, and not wan soul left to tell the tale."

Poor girl! She thought she was brave, and could bear to hear the tidings her heart warned her were coming, but when the unvarnished tale fell on her strained ears she hid her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

"Come, Jessie! dinna tak' on like that, you'll hurt yersel' wi' sic sore sobbin'. We will have to be tellin' them, too"—meaning her father and mother. "Come awa'! I'll carry your bundle o' sticks." And he limped by her side to the gate of her parents' cottage.

Sandy Macdonald was one of the gardeners at Glen Cairne Castle. He had married late in life, and Jessie, now about the age of twenty, was the only child.

Reaching the cottage, Hector held out his hand.

"I'll no' go in, Jessie," he said; "you'll no' be that carin' for neebours th' noo. Tak' the paper in bye. You'll see aal that it says."

Mrs. Macdonald, a stout, motherly-looking body, with black hair, came and met her daughter.

"I see you ken the ill news, Jessie, the post lad waas tellin' us." Then, addressing Hector, who was turning to go away, "Come in bye, laird. Father (meaning her husband) would like to speak wi' you. He is ben the hoose"—indicating the kitchen, which was the common sitting-room.

Slowly making her way into the best room, where Jessie had preceded her and now sat silently weeping, she took the paper from the girl's unresisting hand and read aloud the paragraph Hector had marked with the nail of his thumb. It narrated the foundering of the ship *Grandtully Castle*, during a gale off the Spanish coast, with all hands, and, darkness setting in, no help could be rendered the living souls on board. In the morning, when search was made, nothing was seen or fallen in with, save an upturned boat which had belonged to the ill-fated ship.

Disengaging herself from her mother's arms, where she had taken refuge in the first shock of her grief, Jessie looked up with anguished eyes.

"Waas there nothin' more, mother! Waas his body——" But her sobs broke out afresh.

"No, the bodies were sweepit awa' by the undercurrent th' minute they went doon. Oh! my bairn, we must submit to God's will. I waas aalways prayin' there might be some news—somethin' to hold on by like; but that canna' be now, and poor Jack—and a pretty lad he waas—is as drooned as drooned can be, and may oor Father in Heaven be good to him."

A distant sound, at the moment almost pathetic, appealed successfully to Jessie's considerate nature.

"That's Crumpie caallin' on me; it is long past her time, and she will be thinkin' I'm forgettin' her."

Alive to a sense of her duties, she abandoned her grief for the time to minister to the wants of the dumb brute, and, quitting the room, the clanking of the milk pails was heard as she hurried across the yard to the byre.

As soon as opportunity permitted Jessie returned to the cottage, and, putting on her hat and jacket, told her mother she was going to Killiecrombie to sit a while with Mrs. Robertson.

"Maybe she has no' heard yet aboot Jack. I think it is aalways the only son of the poor weedow that gets killed or drooned," she sighed, as she passed out.

Presently Fraser and Macdonald, who had been sitting talking about Widow Robertson and the news affecting her son Jack, appeared in the doorway.

"I see Jessie yonder taakin' the road to Killiecrombie," Fraser remarked, as he looked after her long and thoughtfully.

Then, turning sharply round, he encountered the steadfast gaze of the girl's father.

A light of subtle understanding sprang to the eyes of the two men as they faced each other, and in that one fleet moment Jessie's fate was sealed.

Standing in the sunlight, where Fraser left him, Macdonald presented a striking figure. Well over six feet, and of sturdy frame, he looked the typical Highlander. His head was large, with thick, grey hair and flowing beard, and his eyes, dark and lustrous, notwithstanding his three score and ten years, looked searchingly from under their shaggy brows.

"Oh, yes," he was saying, "Fraser is a fine man, a very fine man whatever, and there's no' a lass aboot the countryside but

whaat would be prood to be the leddy o' Baldreggan."

Meanwhile Jessie, pursuing her way to Killiecrombie, was overtaken by one of those sudden downpours of rain so common to the district. Widow Robertson, catching sight of the hurrying figure, flung an ample plaid over her head and shoulders and went out to meet her. She threw half the plaid over Jessie, so that they had to walk with their arms round one another to keep within compass of its welcome shelter.

Her voice, lifted up in concern and solicitude for her visitor's drenched and uncomfortable plight, came to Jessie as a providential reprieve at the moment of a trying ordeal. It was not until her wet hat and outer coverings were removed that the widow noticed the girl's pale, sorrowful face and tearful eyes.

"Whaat ails you, Jessie?" she asked, taking the girl's hands between her own.

For answer Jessie burst into violent sobbing, and, releasing her hands, produced the newspaper, and held it out, gasping:

"It's Jack."

With trembling hands the widow took the paper, which had been so folded that the heading of the paragraph about the loss of the ship at once caught her eye, and while she was reading it Jessie ceased her sobbing.

Widow Robertson was still young, but her eyes wore a wistful expression beneath their sweeping black lashes, while her hair, which was in great profusion, was of snowy whiteness. It had changed from black to white within a year of the death of her husband, a gamekeeper, who had been killed in a desperate encounter with some poachers.

"No, Jessie," she said at last, turning to the girl at her side, "it does not come home to me." Yet she was visibly affected, but it was the nature of the news, not the conviction of her son's death, that moved her to tears. "To jump at the first news that comes that his ship is wracked! Oh, lassie! the yearnin' o' a mother's hert is no' to be so easily froze as that. Every night before the sun sinks ayont the hills there, I stand at my door scannin' the road for a sicht o' my laddie wi' the roguish curls that would never keep aff his brow, and the blue een aye laughin' wi' kindness or mischief, and I will keep lookin' for him till he comes home to marry ye, Jessie. Wae's me if the day should ever come when I'll set mysel' doon and say: 'My Jack will come back to me no more.'"

"Besides," she added solemnly, "no wan of oor family ever passed away without the warnin' comin'."

"The warnin'?" gasped Jessie, in an awe-struck tone, as she looked up with scared eyes.

"Yes, it aalways——" The widow broke off with a sharp cry of pain, her hand stealing to her heart. Jessie put her arm round her, seeing the eyes close wearily as one about to swoon.

"Whaat is it? Whaat can I do for you?"

The widow motioned with her hand reassuringly, murmuring: "It'll pass—it'll pass!"

As they sat there in close embrace a deep sigh that came from neither woman floated in the air. Jessie lifted her eyes, and, looking past the still form in her arms to the opposite wall, beheld silhouetted on its white surface a human figure with uplifted arms and clasped hands, the head bowed down—a picture of grief. Her own intuition told her this was the death warning, but for whom?

Spell-bound and speechless with fear and horror, she released her arm from about the waist of her companion, and placing it round her neck, drew the face towards herself and away from the wall. She noticed not the swiftly-approaching thunderstorm, with its enveloping gloom—into which the apparition vanished.

The darkness grew until it became as the blackness of night, and a great fear came upon the girl—a cold shiver passing over her. A sense of relief came when the figure within her arms at last moved, and slowly upraised itself.

"You will tell Jack I aalways expeckit him and hoped to see you and him married and happy."

The words were spoken with an effort: Jessie, half-dazed and not quite comprehending, answered vaguely:

"I will be sure to do that," then, waiting with bated breath to hear what more was to follow, she leant forward and strained her eyes to pierce the darkness, the better to see into her companion's face, when a flash of lightning that seemed to repeat itself illumined the room, and in that instant of searchlight Jessie saw the beautiful face of the widow as death had changed it:

The storm passed as quickly as it came, and the sun burst forth anew in all its glory, while the little birds gave it joyous welcome with their song.

Sandy Macdonald, coming to fetch Jessie home, was striding unceremoniously into the cottage—the door of which was open—when he suddenly came to a standstill, aghast at the scene before him: The widow was sitting in her chair dead, her head thrown back, while at her feet lay the unconscious form of his daughter.

If he felt a spark of pity at all, it was transitory. The superstition inherent to his race faced his guilty conscience, for had not that come to pass that in his heart of hearts he had wished for—the mother of Jack out of the way so that she could no longer put Jessie up to cherish the hope of his return and so discourage the laird's advances?

Macdonald then tried to arouse his daughter, but failing, went out to summon the neighbours.

* * * * *

The death of Widow Robertson was a great blow to Jessie. The only one to whom she was wont to go and pour out her grievances—always sure of kindly and comforting sympathy—was now beyond the pale of earthly touch.

Week followed week and still no news of Jack, and Jessie, heavy-eyed—the bright colour gone from her cheeks, moved about performing her daily duties conscientiously, but her blithesome voice was heard in song no more. It was mute with the dumbness of despair.

Jack out of the way, and his mother no longer alive to encourage Jessie to look upon his return as a possible, if not a probable thing, the laird—who had long coveted Jessie for a wife—saw no reason for remaining longer in suspense, when an event happened, which, while it came as a calamity upon the Macdonalds, proved a powerful factor in furthering his matrimonial designs.

A terrific storm swept over the country one Autumn night, and veterans of the forest that had braved the storms of centuries were ruthlessly thrown down by the force of the gale. Partially torn branches of trees that were a menacing source of danger had to be removed. While standing on a ladder so engaged, Macdonald fell to the ground and was picked up with a fractured leg.

The dreary Winter passed. Trouble succeeded trouble in the Macdonald household. There was no little "nest-egg" put away, for illness with its attendant expenses soon exhausted the scanty means, and but for the laird o' Baldreggan, the family would have suffered greater privations. And so

they were "beholden" to him. Fraser was now a nightly visitor at the cottage.

"I'm sure I have been a bother comin' here so often," said the laird one evening, while they were all seated round the fireplace, "but sittin' alone up at the farm whaat is a man to be doin'? I canna be affer readin' print for ever. My old moather, she ta'ght me to knit, and sometimes I tak' a stockin' in my hand, but knittin' is an aafu' thing for makin' one's thoughts travel."

"And what are you thinkin' aboot whatever when you get like that?" asked Jessie, her face looking brighter that evening.

"Oh, sometimes wan thing and sometimes another thing."

"But is there not wan thing that you're offener thinkin' aboot than another?" she pressed teasingly.

"I couldn't say, I'm sure," looking sheepish under cover of filling his pipe.

"Now, Baldreggan," challenged old Sandy, "confess that the thought you're thinkin' offener aboot is a wife."

"I would not be sayin' but whaat you are right."

"And what for no," broke in Mrs. Macdonald, "there's many a lass that would jump at ye."

"Oh, may be, but it's no' the jumpin' wans I would look at, whatever. I will mak' the jump myself."

"Will it be anywan aboot the country-side?" queried Sandy.

There was no reply, and in the silence that followed Jessie looked up to find the eyes of all three fixed upon her, as if by mutual accord they had mentally voted the lucky one to be herself.

Hastily finding an excuse for leaving the room, the brightness gone from her face, she made her way down the garden and out by the wicket gate. Her womanly instinct told her what it all meant—Hector's kindness, her parents' everlasting praises of him, their indebtedness for almost the very food they ate—and *she* was to be the redemption price of it all!

"Oh! it's 'Auld Robin Gray' ower again," she cried, with bitterness.

"My father canna work,
My mother canna spin;
I toil day and night,
But their bread I canna win."

"In the song the sailor lad came back, but I will see mine no more, and old Hector will come a-wooin' me. My hert! my hert! Oh! it is sore. Wae's me! Wae's me!" she cried in anguish;

The next day Baldreggan came to the cottage and asked Jessie to marry him:

"I am no' that young, but I will be a guidman to you."

He told her of his ample means, and fore-bye she would get his sister's gold watch and chain, and her sealskin jacket, "only wance on."

Her father argued sair,
Her mother didna speak,
But she looked in her face,
Till her heart was like to break.

Ah! how could she say "Yes" to the laird with Jack's appealing eyes and mute lips always before her mental vision!

Nervously fingering the hem of her apron, Jessie sat pale and tearful, and when he waited for the answer that seemed to come and go on her quivering lips, she only lifted her piteous eyes and brokenly pleaded for a little more time.

"Just a week, just wan week." Then she broke down into grief that was uncontrollable.

The week's respite passed and yet another, and still Jessie asked for more time. She knew that if she married the laird, she must henceforth dismiss Jack from her heart and thoughts evermore.

"You canna marry a drooned corpse lyin' at the bottom o' the sea," hurled her father at her one night during an angry discussion.

It was a cruel projectile, and the ghastly picture jumped to her eyes with a realism that was staggering. She almost slid from her standpoint, but pulling herself together, fell back upon her hopes and fears.

Meanwhile, the laird avoided the cottage. He was obviously "huffed," if nothing more. Then her father glowered at her, and her mother found her voice and nagged at her, so the poor girl's life became a daily torture.

Converging circumstances are usually rushed to a climax by the turning up of the unexpected. The Fates cunningly devise the preliminaries; then there is no escaping the inevitable, as will be seen.

Jessie had been to the village on an errand for her mother, and returned crushed and humiliated. She was being gossiped about.

One condoled with her on being jilted by the laird o' Baldreggan, and another was overheard to declare that the laird might do better than marry the "likes o' her"; but the crowning blow was to be told by the storekeeper where she had gone for pro-

visions that Mrs. Macdonald must pay the balance of her overdue account before she could be supplied with any more goods on credit.

Shamed and sick at heart, she wearily flung herself into a chair at the window, her elbow resting on the sill, her hand supporting her chin. Her eyes—painfully strained—turned towards the distant hills, yet seeing nothing.

Her mother sat tapping the floor with her foot, a habit she had when in a disturbed state of mind; while her father, seated at the fireside, was puffing at his pipe in a manner that Jessie knew from experience meant a fit of ill-temper. She wondered what would happen next.

She was not long kept in suspense. Her father, fidgeting in his chair, dropped his pipe, and it lay shattered into fragments on the hearth. This incident, trifling as it was, broke down the barrier of any self-restraint, for he at once turned and faced his daughter with unreasonable and ungovernable rage:

"There you sit wi' your idle hands. Do ye ken the factor has been here, and he would be tellin' me that as I'm no' fit any more to be the gard'ner, I must quit the hoose at Whit Sunday. My broken leg has been trouble enough for me, without bein' turned to the door at my time o' life wi' a pension o' ten shillin's a week to provide for us aal."

"I'm sorry to be hearin' that, father."

"Sorry!" he flung at her violently; "ye might have been the leddy o' Baldreggan to-day and helpin' your auld father an' mother. That would have been decener than foolin' wi' the laird and makin' your name a byword about the place."

"Foolin' wi' the laird!" "My name a byword!" she repeated in dismay and astonishment. Then, as the gossip of the village confronted her, she hung her head, knowing not in her bewilderment and helplessness what to answer.

"Let her be, father," interposed Mrs. Macdonald. "We will try to put off the evil day by settlin' wi' the rent in advance, and no' ask to sit rent-free."

"That will be a grand idee," said her husband, in a mocking tone, "and you will have the siller in your pock, I wouldna wonder." And he laughed derisively as he turned to the fire again, with his feet on the fender.

"We can sell the coo," shot out his wife:

Jessie could stand this no longer. She knew her mother was nagging at her; she had

borne this sort of thing for months because she had not said "Yes" to the laird, but put him off instead.

She rose slowly from her seat by the window, her right hand holding on to the back of her chair, the other nervously toying with the locket containing Jack's likeness, which she always wore at her throat. Her brow was contracted with pain, and her eyes were like those of a hunted deer brought to bay, while the tremulous lips struggled to combat the rising sob.

She turned to her mother, the painfully-heaving bosom bespeaking the agitation within, but her voice was steady, albeit the words were spoken in broken sentences.

"You needna sell the cow, mother, as long as there's me to sell—I am willin' to go to the highest bidder."

Then she stepped forward, her voice tuned to the withering contempt that held her in possession.

"And it is you, my father and mother," measuring them with the scorn of her eye, "that would give me, a young girl, over to an old man like Hector Fraser, to ease your minds because of what you have taken from him? To make him a return, you would barter your only child, as if she had no soul or hert or mind of her own—as if she waas nothin' more to you than wan o' the cattle i' the field—but, mind you! if I have to plight my troth wi' Hector Fraser, and perjure my soul by swearin' to love and obey him, you! you, my father and mother, will have to answer to God in Heaven—no! me! But never heed," speaking in bitterness, "you will get your wish yet, and show aff your daughter as the 'Laird o' Baldreggan's leddy.' I'll send him word that I will trust wi' him the morn's nicht."

Like one feeling the way in the dark, she went up the ladder stair to her little attic room, and, sinking down at the bedside, wearily rested her head on her outstretched arms.

* * * * *

The trysting-place was a rustic seat standing back from the embankment above the Falls o' Cairne, and the hour seven of the evening.

Her work in the house over, and Crumpie made comfortable for the night, Jessie went up to her room and proceeded to dress herself with some little pains, choosing what she thought became her best, not from any feeling of vanity—she was too dejected for that—but because she believed that the important step in her life she was about to take called for special observance.

As she was departing from the house her mother called out:

"You will no' be goin' awa' like that, Jessie, wi' bitterness in your hert!" Then she burst into tears.

Now that the crucial moment had arrived and her child was ready to make the sacrifice she had been driven to, the mother's soul stirred within her, and she would fain have said "Stay!" But Jessie, with a determined purpose in her eyes, coldly shook hands with her parents and turned away. She showed no emotion—she couldn't soften to them now; the gulf between them was too wide.

She walked slowly towards the river. Outwardly calm, her mind was in a perfect tumult, and her throbbing heart like to burst its strings.

Involuntarily she lifted her eyes to the other side of the river to Glen Cairne Castle, the windows of which were ablaze on the occasion of a ball that evening to celebrate the home-coming of the young Earl and Countess of Glen Cairne from their marriage tour.

"Ah," she sighed, "it mun be gran' to be a leddy covered wi' jewels and wooed by braw lovers. I would no' be havin' this sorrow in my hert if I waas wan o' them."

Reaching the rustic bench she dropped wearily on to the seat. Her agitation of the night before, the struggle within to keep herself from breaking down altogether, and the almost total abstinence from food, had left her weak, with nerves unstrung. Thoughts passed with lightning rapidity through her mind.

Alone amidst the wild solitude of the place, the step she was about to take came upon her with an overwhelming vehemence. She awoke to the sense of its significance. A wild frenzy possessed her. In the gathering twilight things took shapes that were strange and unnatural, and the tumbling water of the Falls in the distance reached her ears like a continual moaning.

Was that a footstep?

She could not bring herself to look round. She listened with strained ear, an irrepressible terror seized her, and she started to her feet.

"No! No! I will not give my young life to that man. I feel that I loathe him. I think I'm goin' mad," pressing her hands against her throbbing temples. "I canna plight my troth wi' him, and I'll rather die than live again wi' my father and mother and swallow the waaters o' bitterness ev'ry day o' my life. God have mercy on me, I canna stand this! My brain is on fire. I'll

droon mysel'." And she darted forward. "I'll droon mysel' in the Black Pool."

Then she was overcome with horror, for she remembered that it was there a shepherd had recently fallen in and been drowned, and his body never recovered, and she saw the weird spot before her.

She paused abruptly, and distractedly passed her hand across her fevered brow. The action dislodged her bonnet, and her hair, escaping from its fastenings, fell around her.

To get away! To get away before he came was the one idea that possessed her for the moment.

She went swiftly towards the embankment sloping down to the seething, foaming water. It was steeper than she was aware of. She began to run and could not stop herself; then, in desperation, flinging herself down, she clutched at the heather and ferns that broke within her grasp.

Slipping nearer and nearer the brink—crying for help where no help could come—her foot touched an upstanding root that served for the moment as a prop, but it was supple and yielding; it could not stand her weight, and again she called aloud for help.

A voice answered back—a voice she knew so well—telling her to hold on.

With difficulty she moved her head in the direction whence it came. Ah! the "cradle" above the Falls! It was being rapidly worked across the boiling waters, and came with a thud against the bank.

A form leapt out and a sailor's sure foot swiftly covered the distance, and he flung himself upon the senseless form of Jessie ere it slipped into the river. He carried her

up the embankment and watched her until the closed eyes opened.

"Jack! Jack!" she murmured, throwing herself in a fit of passionate weeping into his arms.

"Oh! Jessie, my lass! What brought you here to-night?" his sea-blue eyes looking with concern into her pale and troubled face. "And in such a plight, too—my heart was never so near my mouth in my life."

"Oh! laddie! laddie!" sweeping the roguish curls from his brow: "I've been sair beset. I canna' speak of it th' nicht: We'll have warlds to tell wan another th' morrow. Am I not dreamin' to find you back like wan from the deid, and me to be sittin' here when the cruel waater waas ready to tak' me? Yes! You'll tell me aal about it th' morrow, Jack, but no' th' nicht. Let me enjoy the bliss o' havin' you beside me again." Then looking wildly about. "But, oh, tell me, lad, is it no' a dream, with a cruel awakenin' comin' to break my hert?"

"No! lass! It's no dream—I'm here, your own Jack."

Then, her surcharged heart relieved at last, she rested within the protecting arms of her long-lost sailor laddie, her head pillowed on his breast.

A solitary figure, with halting gait and bowed head, moved out from the shadow of the trees. He had gone to his tryst, his heart full of hope, but another had trysted before him. He paused a moment and looked back, then, heaving a deep sigh, disappeared under the descending mantle of the night:

❖ ❖ A CENTURY FROM NOW. ❖ ❖

*If you and I should wake from sleep
A century from now,
Back to the grave we'd want to creep,
A century from now.
We'd witness such a startling change,
Find everything so wondrous strange
We'd hurry back across the range.
A century from now.*

*A woman forty, fat, and fair,
A century from now
May warm with grace the Speaker's chair,
A century from now:
The Cabinet may be a flock
Of girls, gay of hat and frock,
Who talk, but who won't mend a sock,
A century from now;*

*The people all will fly on wings
A century from now,
(Not heavenly, but patent things)
A century from now.
They'll soar aloft, devoid of fear,
On pinions of a chainless gear,
And change their flyers every year,
A century from now.*

*There'll be no restaurants at all,
A century from now;
The home will have no dining-hall
A century from now.
The chemists all our wants will fill,
With food in tablets, and to still
Our thirst we'll simply take a pill,
A century from now.*

Our Pinafore Pages.

In the popular magazines of the present day it is right that children should find a certain number of pages set aside for their own especial enjoyment. In THE NOVEL MAGAZINE they are not disappointed. Each story is written in simple language that every child can understand.

ELSIE'S KIND FRIEND.

By BIMBIE.

This fairy story is written by a little girl who is only eleven years old. She is the most youthful contributor to these pages up to the present. The story appears just as she wrote it.

ELSIE was a little girl of seven years old, who lived with her mother and father in a cottage on the edge of a wood. Elsie was very fond of this wood, and went there nearly every day. Her father was a woodcutter, and her mother knitted stockings which Elsie sold in the town.

One day Elsie was selling stockings when a very tall gentleman in a top-hat came up to her, and said kindly :

"How much is this pair of stockings, little maid?"

"Two shillings and threepence, sir," she answered timidly.

"How beautifully they are knitted," he said. "Did you do them?"

"No, sir, my mother knitted them," she said, a little less shyly, now that she saw how kind the gentleman was.

"Well, I'll buy that pair, then."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Elsie, gratitude shining in her eyes. "Mother'll be so pleased."

So she wrapped them up and gave them to the gentleman, and, it being late, set off home with lightened heart.

When she got home she met with a very sad welcome. Her father had been run over and had died while she had been away! She found her mother very sad, but tried to be cheerful to cheer her mother up, too. But her mother fretted so, that she became too ill to knit any more stockings.

Poor little Elsie was at a loss what to do, for when she had sold the three pairs of

stockings that were left she and her mother would have nothing to eat, and, besides all that, she didn't like to leave her mother alone in the house while she went to the town to sell the three pairs of stockings. However, she made her mother comfortable, put a jug of water and some of their last loaf on a chair by her mother's bed, and set off, not singing as the day before, but with a very heavy heart in her breast.

When she got to the town she sat down, poor little girl, to wait till a customer came. But she did not wait long before a grand footman came out of a neighbouring house, and, to Elsie's astonishment, came straight up to her.

"Elsie," he said, "my master has sent me to ask you to come up to his room to see him."

"Very well, sir," said Elsie politely.

The footman seemed to like to be called "sir," for he looked as if he did.

She got to the drawing-room, and was surprised to find that "the master," as the footman had called him, was the same gentleman as she had seen the day before. He went back with Elsie to see her mother, and, to Elsie's great delight, it was arranged that they were to go to live with the tall gentleman.

Elsie grew up a good, kind woman, and when she was sixteen her mother died, so she was an orphan, but at twenty-three years of age she married the tall gentleman's son, and they lived happily together for many, many years.

MR. PRICKLEBACK'S PARTY. * * * *

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE.

The story of a feast given by a hedgehog.

MR. PRICKLEBACK felt very pleased with himself, for he had a splendid plan in his mind.

"Really," thought he, "I must be a clever hedgehog. I wonder that other people have not found it out before this. I suppose that it is because they are too stupid. Now, my wife, I am sure, does not pay enough attention to what I tell her. I suppose she thinks I am only an ordinary hedgehog. Never mind; I will go at once and tell her what I mean to do. Then she will see what a bright young fellow I am."

He made his way across the cornfields to where, in the corner, his wife, Mrs. Prickleback, had built a nest with a nice little roof to keep off the rain:

"Take care, do," whispered Mrs. Prickleback, as he came near; "the children are asleep, and I do not want to wake them."

There were five little hedgehogs in the nest. But Mr. Prickleback was too excited to trouble about the children:

"Oh, bother!" said he; "let them wake, if they want to. I have such a splendid plan in my mind."

Mrs. Prickleback laughed. She had heard of Mr. Prickleback's splendid plans before:

"If you had to look after the children when they are awake, you would not talk as you do. Well, now, what is your plan?"

The spines with which Mr. Prickleback was covered stood up quite stiffly in his excitement.

"I am going to have an evening party," said he. "It is really a splendid idea. The harvest is nearly over and the cold weather will soon be here. We must lose no time."

For a few moments Mrs. Prickleback was quite silent, and then she spoke in a cold and angry tone.

"That is a very fine idea, certainly. And what do you expect to do while you have this evening party?"

"Why, of course, you will be there too, with me, helping to receive our guests."

"And, pray, who will look after the children?"

"Oh, well! I really must say I had not thought of that!" stammered the husband-hedgehog:

"Well, I should think about it, if I were you. Now, please go away, unless you wish to help me. Here is dear little Spiney opening her eyes. It is too bad to wake the darlings."

Mr. Prickleback strolled off, feeling not half so pleased with himself as he had been five minutes before. He made his way round the cornfield, and was fortunate enough to find a nice fat beetle scurrying off to pay a visit to his friends. Mr. Prickleback snapped up this beetle in a moment, but he did not eat it; he took it home in his mouth as a little gift for Mrs. Prickleback.

Fortunately he found Mrs. Prickleback in a much better temper. She was quite glad to see her husband, and was much pleased with his kind thought of her. They shared the beetle between them, and Mrs. Prickleback was careful to leave the two hind legs for her eldest son; for she was never greedy. Together they went for another walk round the cornfield, for the children were safely asleep in bed, and this time Mrs. Prickleback was very pleasant, and ready to listen to all that her husband had to say.

"You must not forget," said she, with a wise shake of her head, "that an evening party is a very expensive and often a very troublesome affair."

"I have thought about all that," said Mr. Prickleback. "I know exactly what we shall want."

"But who will be the guests?" asked Mrs. Prickleback.

"That is my only difficulty," he said. "I have been wondering for the last half hour whom we had better ask. There is Mr. Squirrel, but he is such a conceited young fellow."

Mrs. Prickleback again nodded her head wisely.

"He is conceited enough, to be sure; but, all the same, I think we had better ask him. Then there are Mr. and Mrs. Mole; I thought that I would ask them, too."

Mrs. Prickleback did not look very pleased upon hearing this:

"Oh, well," said she, "of course, if you

want to ask them, you must ; but for my part I think that Mr. Mole is a most disagreeable fellow ; he spends nearly all his time away there in the ground and hardly speaks to anyone ; besides that, he is most shockingly greedy—so people say. As for his wife, I have never seen her."

Now it was Mr. Prickleback's turn to become cross.

"If you do not like the people I am going to ask, you had better stay away," said he, rather rudely.

Mrs. Prickleback was so vexed at this that she would not speak for some time. Indeed, they had walked half-way round the field before she made another remark.

"That is only three," said she at last ; "you will have to ask some others."

"I thought of asking Miss Dormouse."

Mrs. Prickleback looked surprised.

"Miss Dormouse ! I should think she would be afraid to come."

"Afraid ? Nonsense ! Why should she be afraid ?" said Mr. Prickleback.

"There was a time when I remember you having a little dormouse for your supper," replied his wife with a sly smile.

"And as for Mr. Mole, I should be sorry to trust him anywhere near Miss Dormouse. He would finish her in two mouthfuls."

"I hope that I and my guests will know how to behave better than that," said Mr. Prickleback.

"That is four ; not a very large number for a party. Are you going to ask anyone else ?"

"Yes ; I shall ask Mr. Brown Bunny, his wife, and his eldest daughter."

"That will be seven. Will that be all ?"

"I am not sure. Anyhow, I have often heard that seven is a lucky number. Now, my dear, if you will go to the children, I will take a walk round and see if I can find some glow-worms to light up the supper-table."

So Mrs. Prickleback hurried back to her nest and her babies, while Mr. Prickleback continued his stroll round the field. He soon found the glow-worms, and told them he would want their help the day after to-morrow to make his supper-table look bright and pretty. At first the glow-worms did not seem anxious to do this ; but after a little while they agreed, especially when the hedgehog told them that if they did not come he would most certainly gobble them up without thinking twice about it.

The next thing to be done was to see

about the supper. This Mr. Prickleback did all by himself.

He collected all the good things he could think of for supper. You might not, perhaps, have called them "good," but Mr. Prickleback thought they were simply delicious. He had a large heap of worms and another large heap of beetles. His eyes shone with joy as he gathered these together.

"What a feast we will have !" thought he. Then, because Mr. Squirrel was coming, he got a fine heap of acorns and nuts.

Besides all these, there were a few green apples from an orchard close by ; a dainty little heap of grains of ripe wheat for Miss Dormouse, and some cabbage-leaves for the Rabbit family. The great trouble was to find something for the Bats. Mr. Prickleback knew that they were fond of flies, but liked to eat them alive, and most certainly preferred to catch the flies themselves.

All the friends that were asked accepted Mr. Prickleback's invitation, and as the time drew near for the party there was much excitement. The table was spread on a mossy bank close under the hedge. The glow-worms—six together on a green leaf—shone as brightly as ever they could. Both Mr. and Mrs. Prickleback were dressed quite smartly, and stood waiting to receive their guests.

Mr. Squirrel was the first to arrive. He came with a hop, skip and a jump, his bushy tail waving over his head.

"Hullo !" said he cheerfully ; "here I am. Why don't you have your party in the morning when the sun is shining ? I am growing sleepy already. Hullo ! what are these ? Nuts ?"

So saying, he snatched a nut from the table, and sat upon his hind legs cracking it. Mr. and Mrs. Prickleback pretended that they had not seen this ; but, really, they were very much shocked at Mr. Squirrel's bad behaviour.

Then came Mr. and Mrs. Mole, both blinking at the light, and Mr. Mole grumbling as hard as he could.

"How d'ye do ?" said he. "Why didn't you have your party in a snug, warm burrow underground ? I only hope my dear wife won't catch her death of cold through coming up here."

Then Mr. Mole saw dishes piled up with worms and beetles, and his eyes began to shine greedily ; but he did not snatch at them as Mr. Squirrel had done.

After this the other guests arrived one by one. Miss Dormouse came, very nervous

and timid, for she was dreadfully afraid that some hungry guest might gobble her up in mistake for his supper. The pretty little Rabbits came, all very soft and dainty, and full of fun.

It was really a strange supper-party. Mr. Squirrel would not sit still for two minutes together, but went frisking and skipping all over the place. Mr. Mole, I am sorry to say, was most terribly greedy, and seized at everything near to him and gobbled it down as quickly as possible. Then he turned and looked so hungrily and greedily at Miss Dormouse, who was sitting next to him, that she, half-dead with fright, slipped off her seat and lay under the table, pretending to be asleep.

Then a terrible thing happened. A loud laugh came from the hedge behind.

"Ha! ha! ha! You didn't ask me to your supper-party, but you see I've come, after all!"

Each of the guests turned pale with fear. The Rabbits gave one wild shriek, and were away in a moment. Mr. Mole, in a great flurry, whispered to his wife:

"My dear, my dear, it's Mr. Fox!"

Mr. Fox came towards Mr. Prickleback with a grin on his face.

"How do you do, my dear little hedgehog?" he said.

Mr. Prickleback knew what to do. In a moment he rolled himself up into a tight, spiny ball, and in that same moment every one of the guests cleared out of sight, and Mrs. Prickleback with them.

"Come, come, my friend, don't be shy,"

said Mr. Fox, giving the spiny ball before him a gentle touch with his foot. "Well, if you really won't unroll and talk to me nicely, I shall have to take you to the brook over there, and see what a little bath will do."

So he pushed Mr. Prickleback before him to the brook at the end of the field, but, as it happened, the brook was dry.

"So you've saved your skin this time, my friend; but, never mind, some day we'll meet again and have a supper-party together, and you shall be the supper, my dear hedgehog."

Saying this with a wicked laugh, Mr. Fox gave a kick with all his might, and Mr. Prickleback flew through the air into the middle of a large bed of stinging-nettles.

* * * * *

Late, very late, that night, a sad and weary hedgehog crept home to Mrs. Prickleback.

"Here I am, my dear," he said meekly.

Mrs. Prickleback sat up and looked at her husband with scorn in her eyes.

"Here you are!" said she; "I should just think so. It is not your fault that my precious lambs are not motherless to-night. Never you dare to let me hear you speak of a party again."

* * * * *

Far away in his den Mr. Fox was chuckling to himself.

"Silly little creatures!" said he. "They did not know that I had just had two fat hens and a duck for my supper, and could not eat another morsel. If I had been really hungry I could have finished them all off in one mouthful."

* * * *DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN.* * *

BY GEORGIA CLAY.

"Oh, mother!" cried the baby flowers,

"Oh, mother, mother dear,
Need we stay longer in the earth?"

'Tis dark and gloomy here.
We hear the birds above our heads—
Right merrily they sing;
Just let us take a tiny peep
At the returning Spring."

"Be patient, dears, it is not time,"

Dame Nature wisely said.
"A little stronger you must grow
Before you leave your bed;
A chilling frost might hurt the bloom
Upon each baby cheek;
So cover up and lie quite still
For yet another week."

Obedient they closed their eyes,
All save a wilful few.
At dead of night they upward climbed,
To steal a drop of dew.
Alas! a sheet of ice struck cold
Against each tiny head,
And Mother Nature found them there
Next morning—stiff and dead.

Reaping the Whirlwind.

By ALFRED LEWIS, A.R.C.A.

THE FIRST FIFTEEN CHAPTERS.

DURING the marriage ceremony between Miss Adeliza Fane Capell, niece of a rich East Indian merchant, and the Hon. Kenneth Wilgorton, son of the late Viscount Clapham and of Lady Clapham, a slight disturbance is caused by two foreigners—a man and a woman—but no reason can be assigned for it.

On arriving at Mr. Fane Capell's house, the newly-made bride retires to her room. The next thing that is known is that she has disappeared, leaving a note for her husband, which says that she cannot live with him. No one had seen her go, but it transpires later that one of the foreigners who had been at the marriage was watching the house for a long time after the return of the couple. Could he have anything to do with the mystery?

Frederick Whinstone, Wilgorton's best man, starts to make some inquiries. He tracks down the two foreigners, and finds that they are a Madame Lenoir and her son, at whose school the missing bride was educated. They deny all knowledge of Mrs. Wilgorton, but outside their door Whinstone picks up a handkerchief bearing that lady's initials. He feels there is some deep mystery here, and returns at once to Wilgorton, who, as soon as he hears the story, starts off in hot haste with a pistol in his pocket.

Whinstone is engaged to Gertrude, daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Brunell, a couple with very decided religious views. After seeing Wilgorton, he goes to their house, where he is arrested on suspicion of murdering Monsieur Lenoir, who has been found shot in a railway carriage. He is allowed out on bail.

Among Gertrude's admirers is Mr. Josiah Pike, a widower and an ardent anti-ritualist. Colonel Brunell favours him as a suitor for his daughter. Gertrude, however, scorns his advances. He is proposing marriage to her one evening when Whinstone is brought into the room by her brother Robert.

CHAPTER XVI:

Was it Murder?

IT has been sagely remarked that there is a good deal of human nature in the world. Some people, it is true, lose a large part of their human nature, and sink pretty much to the level of the brutes, if it is not a libel on the brutes to say so; but very few, however eminent in goodness and virtue, rise quite above their human nature, and perhaps it would be a pity if they did. An angel from Heaven would probably not be a very desirable person to live with on earth. It is to be feared that his superlative goodness would at times irritate one.

Frederick Whinstone was an honourable, upright, straightforward, and truthful young fellow—not by any means faultless—who ever met with a faultless person, man or woman, except in an old-fashioned novel?

Like many modern young Englishmen, he was somewhat reserved about the expression of his own feelings; he did not "wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at," he did not write sonnets to his lady-love's eyebrow, he did not go about proclaiming his passion from the house-tops; but in a sincere and manly way he loved Gertrude Brunell, and he had faith in her.

He had, however, too much human nature in him to contemplate, with perfect equanimity, the scene he had witnessed for a moment when Robert Brunell introduced him so unceremoniously into the

drawing-room of his father's house. He had seen Mr. Pike—a grotesque figure enough—on his knees before Gertrude, and with her hand clasped in his:

It was unmistakably a love scene which blundering Robert had, by his abrupt entrance, interrupted—a love scene on one side at any rate. Gertrude had uttered no word of explanation—indeed, she had had no opportunity to do so—and she had, at her father's request, left the room almost immediately. Her mother had purposely detained her, so that she had not even come forward to wish him good-night, notwithstanding the very painful circumstances in which he was placed.

Although justly indignant at, and deeply wounded by, Colonel Brunell's treatment, he had lingered a little in the hall, hoping that Gertrude would reappear—lingered until a proper sense of what was due to himself compelled him to leave.

She had not come again. And he had been so anxious to have a few more words with her; had imagined she would be so eager to question him about the miserable examination to which he had been subjected, and to offer him her sweet, womanly sympathy. He was deeply disappointed.

Instead of what he expected, he had received cold looks and cold words from her parents, and she had left the room to obey a trifling behest which anyone else could have done equally well. Wounded feeling inclined him to think that she need not have yielded to her father's request so

readily, or she might, in spite of her mother, have hurried back; and he greatly regretted having yielded to his own wishes and to Robert's invitation to go to the house at all that evening. All of which proves that he had a good deal of human nature in him.

He was not jealous of Mr. Pike. That would be too absurd, he told himself. It would also be unworthy of him, and an insult to Gertrude, but he would rather this love scene had not occurred, or, at least, that he had not witnessed it.

Although disposed in every way to think well of Gertrude's father, he could not fail to see some of his weaknesses, to call them by as mild a name as possible; and he had been aware, even before this ridiculous but dreadful charge of murder had been brought against him, that Colonel Brunell did not regard him as at all a desirable prospective son-in-law, and would not be sorry for an opportunity to break off the engagement.

And he was also quite conscious what two of the reasons in particular for this attitude towards him were—that while one was his "worldliness," to use an expression common in that section of the religious world to which Colonel Brunell belonged, and which is often used to indicate the condition of persons who merely make no very definite confession of the faith which is in them, the other was simply his lack of fortune.

The two reasons seemed scarcely consistent with each other; but a dislike for the so-called "worldliness" and a keen appreciation of money, and of those things which worldly riches can procure, often go together.

Colonel Brunell would most emphatically have declared, if spoken to on the subject, that mere riches were nothing compared with goodness, that they were, indeed, too often a delusion and a snare. He taught this doctrine from the pulpit; and probably thought he was giving utterance to his own convictions; but he, nevertheless, very much preferred a rich man to a poor one, even, it is to be feared, when the superior virtue was on the side of the latter, unless the contrast were too glaring; but when what he esteemed goodness and wealth went together then the scale kicked the beam.

Mr. Josiah Pike fulfilled these desirable conditions; he had wealth, goodness, and a serious mission in life, while Whinstone had nothing except birth, good looks, health and strength, and a capacity for making his way in the world. His university career had been creditable; he had passed his

medical examinations with distinction; but his future success was problematical at present, while Pike's position was secured, thanks to his own prudent management and the late Mrs. Pike's bounty.

True, Mr. Pike had no personal attractions, and in Whinstone's eyes was an officious idiot for interfering with other people's opinions; but with Colonel Brunell, good looks went for nothing—he could not enter into the feelings of young people on such a matter—and Mr. Pike's officiousness in such a cause as the one he had embraced was a virtue.

Robert Brunell, in his blundering way, had in part suggested these thoughts to Whinstone.

"Pater would like Gerty to marry Pike," he said. "Fancy her tied up to that old gargoy!"

Whinstone, I repeat, had faith in Gertrude, in her love and constancy. But he began to fear that a good deal of pressure would be brought to bear upon her.

Her life might be made very uncomfortable. Pious lamentations over him, constant admonitions on the duty of children to their parents, and the spiritual danger of having to do intimately with persons manifestly not in a state of grace, would be hard to bear.

Mrs. Brunell he had always liked better than the colonel—he felt that she was not so unfavourable to him; but she was a rather colourless, characterless person, and not at all likely to exert herself much on his behalf, or to oppose the will of her husband.

Then his own position with regard to the charge brought against him was, in truth, unpleasant enough, make as light of it as he might. The evidence adduced at his examination before the coroner could not have been considered at all convincing, even by those who knew nothing of him, or he would not have been admitted to bail. And he could not but believe that he would soon be entirely freed from the charge. But, nevertheless, his position was a disagreeable one, and might have far-reaching consequences. At least, so it seemed to him.

Few people would forget, he thought, that he had once been arrested on a charge of murder, and an unpleasant notoriety would attach to him—a notoriety not likely to improve his professional prospects. And he knew that the shock to his father, though the major tried to hide it, was very great.

Then, again, a murder had certainly, it seemed, been committed. And by whom?

He knew his old school chum and college friend, Wilgorton, to be gentle, generous, honest and true, incapable in calm moments of offering violence to anyone. He knew him to be particularly "level-headed," as he had already expressed it; but might there not be hidden depths of passion in Wilgorton's character which the great provocation he had received would be likely to bring forth? His wild looks on the night of the murder proved this to be so.

Mad jealousy will transform into something very different the mildest and calmest of men, and if Kenneth had believed that the Frenchman was really instrumental in the flight of Adeliza, what more likely than that, in his frenzied excitement, he had shot him?

But where was Adeliza? And where was Wilgorton?

What an extraordinary thing it was if Kenneth, the Frenchman, and he were all, as it appeared, in the same train at the same time, and he was unconscious of it! And while such a deed was being done close to him.

Poor Kenneth! He felt intensely sorry for him. What man in his place, and knowing what perhaps Kenneth had known—he put it to himself in no more definite form—might not, in his rage, have shot the man who had caused all his misery—nay, would not have shot him? But it was unlike Wilgorton to run away from the deed, and allow another to suffer. It was so unlike him that he could not but believe that, if still living, they would soon hear from him.

At his examination Whinstone had tried to say as little as possible about his friend; but he was obliged to answer the questions put to him; and he had fancied he could see the direction the coroner's and jury's thoughts were taking.

He was inexpressibly shocked for his friend's sake; but anyone who knew the circumstances must see that, so far as motive was concerned, Wilgorton was far more likely to have done the deed than he.

When the old Frenchwoman, Madame Lenoir, had sworn that she had seen him, Whinstone, watching the house in Farley Street, and afterwards follow her son, she had been so excited, so evidently beside herself with grief, that her declaration had not perhaps received the grave attention it otherwise might have done. He and

Wilgorton were about the same in height and figure, and might easily have been mistaken for each other in the obscurity of the evening, especially as it was he who had made the inquiries somewhat earlier.

It was an annoying circumstance that his arrest should have taken place at Colonel Brunell's house. Fate seemed to have made the affair as bad for him as it could. He learnt afterwards that the police officer charged with the commission had first gone to his own home, and had been informed by a servant, who did not in the least suspect the officer's errand, of his probable whereabouts.

Did Mrs. Wilgorton, his friend's wife, in her retreat, wherever it was, know of the death of the Frenchman? It seemed almost certain that in the further disclosures which would be made, that young lady's name would be implicated in a serious manner. The few words, frenzied and incoherent as they were, uttered by Madame Lenoir in court, seemed to prove that.

Some mysterious and unpleasant connection must exist between Adeliza and these people. Madame Lenoir appeared to have been the young lady's governess. This fact suggested possibilities too disagreeable to contemplate.

In an interview with his solicitor in the morning it would be necessary, for his own and his father's sake, to reveal all he knew. How could he do it with the least possible injury to his friend?

"I must be careful. But how? How? Well, we shall see what we shall see in a few days," he muttered to himself, as with hands in his pockets, and hat pulled low over his brow, he strode along after leaving Colonel Brunell's house. "It is infernally awkward! And what a reception where I was fool enough to look for some little sympathy and counsel! Poor Gertrude!"

He did not immediately return home. He wanted to be alone for a time, to wrestle with his own doubts and fears, his disappointment and chagrin. In his father's presence he would have to assume a cheerfulness not at all in accordance with his feelings. Moreover, his father would question him about the Brunells, and he was in no mood for such questioning.

He went into Hyde Park and paced up and down one of the now deserted paths. The striking of a neighbouring clock and the distant booming of Big Ben aroused him from his reverie. He felt an impulse to go once more to Lady Clapham's house,

to ascertain whether anything had been heard as yet of Wilgorton. He walked in that direction although the hour was late.

Near the street in which her ladyship's house was situated, he met two people, a man and a woman, the latter a tall, gaunt person wearing a bonnet with gigantic, waving plumes, the former a more insignificant-looking person in a silk hat. He would have passed the couple without notice, but the woman made a pause and said to her companion:

"I tell you it's 'im!"

"Ah! so it is, Sophia—the gent as come to our place makin' inquiries. Good evenin', sir. Glad to see you a-breathin' the free air of 'eaven, as one may say, if you'll excuse me. I thought you was——"

He hesitated.

"I have not the pleasure—oh! it is Mr. and Mrs. Bopple."

"Yes, it are, sir; and we was that struck we couldn't help speakin'; because, you see——"

"You thought I was in a place where the air of Heaven is not quite so free as it is here?" said Whinstone, with an attempt at jocularity:

"Well, sir, we, me and the missus, did hear as you was took up, and we naturally concluded as you was in a place which p'raps I oughtn't to mention to such as you. I'm glad it ain't so."

"Thank you!"

"We in the church 'ave no time to run about inquiren' into the rights of everything we 'ear; and folks is liars," remarked Mrs. Bopple, shaking her feathers. "When we do put ourselves out we gets no thanks."

"I suppose you can tell me nothing fresh about the people concerning whom I made inquiries from you?"

"Well, it ain't allus safe nor thankworthy to say what one knows," replied the verger ambiguously.

"It is important to me to learn all I can about them. If you could help——"

"Oh, yes, I see! Well, it'll soon be talked over enough, I warrant. The fact is, we've just been round to Lady Clapham's 'ouse to tell her, leastways her son, the Honourable, somethin' 'as 'appened at the church this afternoon all along of one of them parties as you was a-speaking of—the female one. The other, if I hear right, is accounted for. A howdacious thing it were, enough to make your 'air come off."

"Indeed! May I ask what it was?"

"I'm sorry we went, though," pursued the verger ruefully: "It'll be a fine thing if I lose my sitiuation through it: I 'ope them as p'raps may be able to speak a good word for me, will do it."

"I have no doubt they will: If you will have the goodness to tell me——"

"I must say as Lady Clapham 'ave disappointed me," put in Mrs. Bopple, impatient that the conversation should go on so far without her: "Of course, our position is humble compared to hern: Nobody goes to deny that. But a woman can be a lady without a 'andle to her name, and in circumstances very different, I say and maintain. Them's my sentiments. And considerin' the trouble we've been at to come all this way, I should hev thought 'Thanks muchly; hev a little refreshment: My servants shall attend to you,' would hev been the order of the day: But, no: 'Stand off! Stand off!' was more like it."

"I daresay Lady Clapham is much worried just now. She must be," said Whinstone, much mystified. "But what is this matter you have to tell?"

"Well, worried or not, she is givin' a grand dinner-party. Oh, you can see the swells' kerridges at the door, if you go: They are jest goin' to leave, I should think: Not but that a party is worryin': I know it by my own little gatherin's. P'raps after all we oughtn't to hev gone to-night: Lady Clapham hev got other things on her mind—we know that—but she needn't hev spoke as she did."

"Do you say Lady Clapham is giving a dinner-party to-night?" Whinstone said.

He was surprised, and, in truth, disgusted: For his friend's smother to give a dinner-party under existing circumstances, seemed to show a want of good taste, a callousness, of which he had not thought her capable:

He had heard of the projected dinner-party, but had imagined that she would put it off in some way. It might mean bravado on her ladyship's part—a determination to put a bold front on to the world, to show that she did not see much cause for anxiety, that the rumours afloat were foolish and unfounded; or it might be that she had really received reassuring news from her son and his wife.

He did not flatter himself that his own awkward predicament would have much influence on her actions, notwithstanding the cause of that predicament: His position in the fashionable world was not such as to make him of much account in her eyes.

But for Kenneth's sake, he thought she would have acted differently. He did not know that it was largely for Kenneth's sake that she acted as she did.

The Bopples had heard, no matter how, of the arrest of Whinstone that morning; they were highly respectable people, and they did not consider it quite consistent with their dignity as officers of the church to be seen talking to a suspected murderer in the public streets, but curiosity and a desire to air their own grievances, together with the fact that it was now late in the evening and there were few passers-by, overcame their scruples.

"I don't mind telling you what we hev been to tell Lady Clapham," said Mr. Bopple. "It seems to me it may concern you as well as her. Do you mind walkin' on with us a bit? It's chilly standin'."

Whinstone acquiesced. His curiosity was aroused; and it was only right that he should learn all he could about these mysterious French people with whom Fate had mixed him up in such an extraordinary and painful manner.

Mr. and Mrs. Bopple related the incident they had already detailed to Lady Clapham, liberally interspersing the relation with remarks extraneous to the subject.

Whinstone naturally listened with great interest. The extraordinary conduct of the Frenchwoman pointed to a marked antagonism on her part to the recent wedding, and if it did not indicate absolute insanity, confirmed some of his own suspicions. He asked many questions, but could gain no further information than that already given:

Mr. Bopple again expressed his high indignation at the affront offered to himself and to the sanctity of the church with which he identified himself, but his indignation was now somewhat mitigated by the reflection—perhaps suggested by the sight of Whinstone—that the "howdacious old person" was probably out of her senses through family troubles of which he had heard something. In this delicate way did the worthy verger allude to the supposed murder of Monsieur Lenoir. Whinstone scarcely heard him:

"I don't know as it ain't a question for Parliament; leastways, for the 'ouse of Commons, tearin' a leaf out of a church register," he repeated. "If people hev their troubles—and I don't make light on 'em—they needn't insult the church and its officers. That don't do no good anyhow:

But females is females," he added, with a sigh.

"It's as funny a case as ever I 'eard on," remarked his wife. "There's some queer folks about, I must say, let alone females. That Honourable Wilgorton didn't look much like dinner-partying to-night, did he?"

"Have you seen Mr. Wilgorton?" Whinstone asked, the mention of his friend's name recalling his wandering attention.

"He nearly knocked me down a minute or two ago, at any rate. Didn't seem to know his way. People seem off their chumps, if you'll excuse such an expression. But may I make so bold as to ask you, sir, how you are goin' on? Of course, we've 'eard things; and sorry we are, I must say."

Whinstone made some brief reply, and Mrs. Bopple, finding he was not disposed to be communicative, proposed to her husband that they should hurry on: Why should they run the risk of losing their characters by dawdling there, as she expressed it, with a man who got all the information he could from them, and gave none in return?

And so Kenneth had come home! Certainly, he was bound to come, but Whinstone could not help feeling thankful. He hesitated in the street. No; anxious as he was to see Wilgorton, he would not go to Lady Clapham's that evening. He would be sure to hear from his friend in the morning.

Full of perplexing thought, he walked home. It was late when he arrived, but he found, as he had feared, his father waiting up for him: It was painful to see how pale, worn and anxious the major looked.

"Well, my boy," he said, putting his hand on his son's shoulder, "how are things at the Brunells'? Did you see Gertrude?"

"Yes," was the laconic response.

There was a silence.

"The Brunells did not receive you well," the major said, presently. "I did not think they would—that is, the father and mother—perhaps; I knew it. I ought to have told you, Fred, but I had not the heart to do it, that when I met Brunell on the Exhibition Road, he—well—he—"

"Expressed a wish that it should be all over between Gertrude and me?" said the young man gloomily.

"Yes, and I could have kicked him, with his pious palaver. I didn't want you to

go to that confounded house again to-day ; but I didn't like to tell you, I say. And when that young Brunell—Bob, they call him, don't they ?—came—he seems a decent sort of fellow, different from his father—and wanted you to go round, I thought I wouldn't interfere. Brunell's pious bark might be worse than his bite, and it would comfort you to see Gertrude."

"I was to blame, dad. I ought not to have gone until things are cleared up: The colonel is only within his rights, perhaps. Bob is a good chap, but neither he nor I can look at the affair as his father does. It is very unpleasant for the colonel, and for them all, you know."

"What is it for you ?"

"You see, they can't help that."

"But Gertrude is all right ?"

"Oh, yes, she is all right !"

"Well, thank Heaven for that ! I wouldn't give much for her if she were not all right. Now is the time to see what your friends are made of, although this confounded charge is sure to break down, whether they bring it home to anyone else or not. Have you heard anything since you have been out ? Has Wilgorton turned up ?"

"Yes ; I hear he has come home."

"Thank Heaven ! That is something. But, of course, he was bound to come as soon as he heard of the fix you are in."

Frederick told his father of his meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Bopple, and repeated the story they had told him. The major listened with great attention, and, at the conclusion of the narrative, brought his fist down on the table with a heavy bang.

"That Adeliza is a huzzy !" he said. "I speak plainly, you know. I call a spade a spade. And that Frenchman, if he was murdered at all, was murdered by Wilgorton. We won't, perhaps, call it murder. He was killed—shot—by him !"

CHAPTER XVII.

Another Arrest Made.

THE next day the news was all over the country that the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton, younger son of the late and brother of the present Viscount Clapham, and grand-nephew of the Duke of Wands-worth, had been arrested at the house of his mother on a charge of murder—the murder of Monsieur Victor Lenoir, the

Frenchman who had been found shot in a carriage of one of the Metropolitan trains: It was asserted that the evidence against his friend, Frederick Whinstone, who had previously been arrested on the same charge, had fallen through ; and the case against that gentleman would, in consequence, be dismissed.

The news created a good deal of excitement, or considerably deepened that already existing, not only amongst those who personally knew Kenneth Wilgorton and the other persons concerned, but in ever-widening circles, right away to the outermost fringe of Society.

Speculation was naturally rife as to what would be the upshot of it all. It was significant that the majority of people at once concluded that he was guilty. As a rule, people are much more inclined to attribute guilt than innocence to a suspected person, however slight the evidence against that person ; and in this case the garbled accounts of the incidents attending Wilgorton's wedding, which had been circulated, lent colour to the general verdict.

Some of these accounts have already been referred to. Now it was said that Lenoir had been a former lover of Miss Fane Capell ; that she had believed him dead ; but that he had turned up at the marriage ; that ~~she~~ ^{he} had actually allowed the ceremony to proceed, and had afterwards eloped with him: The enraged bridegroom had gone after the runaway couple ; had overtaken them at the railway station, followed them into a carriage, and shot the Frenchman.

Some reports added that Adeliza was lying dangerously ill ; others that, in a state of wild terror, she had sprung from the railway carriage while in motion and been killed. A woman's body, much mutilated by passing trains, had been found on the line, and it was actually asserted that it was hers, although it had not yet been identified.

The social position of the accused, of course, lent great additional interest to the affair. It was not often that the public had the morbid gratification of seeing a member of the aristocracy—and a titled one to boot—in the criminal dock ; and it promised itself a corresponding amount of gruesome enjoyment. John Bull's fond partiality for a lord has often been commented upon ; and Englishwomen devour with avidity every scrap of information, however trifling, concerning the doings of the great ones of the land. Here, then, was matter of absorbing interest.

Some pity was felt for Kenneth; but, undoubtedly, he was guilty. It was ridiculous to arrest Whinstone at all. It only showed in what a blundering way things were done:

What motive could Whinstone have for shooting the Frenchman? Friendship for an injured person does not carry people quite so far as that in this prosaic age. Even the very people who had previously maintained that Whinstone was probably guilty now said this. And the fact that Wilgorton had yet to be committed for trial—that he had not even undergone a preliminary examination—was lost sight of.

A few persons in whose eyes the aristocracy, like the King, can do no wrong, somewhat feebly sought to combat all this, but the general opinion was decidedly against Wilgorton. Adeliza, however, came in for the largest share of reprobation. No words were too strong to express the universal disgust at her conduct, little as was really positively known about it.

Would the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton be hanged? Bets were actually made on this delicate point, but those who professed to have the most general knowledge said: "No, decidedly not!"

Even if the case against him were worse than this was likely to be—if there were no extenuating circumstances—some loophole would be found to avoid the extreme penalty of the law. The time was passed when a lord would be hanged, even with a silken rope; and if Wilgorton were not actually a lord, he was the brother of one, and had other high connections:

The excitement was still further increased by the report of the outrage at the church of St. Clement:

Some papers designated the abstraction of the leaf from the register as a daring act of sacrilege, which in most circumstances would be punished with the utmost rigour. But that the act had been committed by the mother of the murdered Frenchman, mad with grief, was some extenuation, and that the torn leaf contained the entry of the marriage of the Honourable Kenneth Wilgorton and Miss Adeliza Fane Capell was the chief point of interest in the affair:

People dearly love a mystery—a mystery in which love and tragedy bear a part, and more especially if persons in good social positions are concerned in it; and here was a highly-seasoned dish of mystery served up piping hot:

The disappearance of the bride, the murder, the arrests, and the strange behaviour of the Frenchwoman, formed the all-absorbing topic of conversation wherever people met together. It even had an effect on the sale of liquid refreshments—talking is dry work, some folks opine; and thus the trade of the country was affected. Public opinion inclined to regard the event at the church as only adding strength to the motives already attributed to Wilgorton for the commission of the deed.

It is a trite saying that the estimation in which any event, public or private, is held depends upon the point of view. To the outside world the events referred to formed an interesting topic for conversation—very shocking, certainly, but intensely interesting, and, in its own way, enjoyable—life would be very dull if nothing ever happened out of the common. To those more intimately concerned the aspect was very different.

Lady Clapham thought the end of the world must be at hand—a belief shared by Mr. Capell. Neither could conceive that the world would still go on pretty much as usual. Lady Clapham's friends speculated freely as to how she would bear this fresh and awful trial.

Those who had attended her recent dinner-party were eagerly questioned as to how she had comported herself on that occasion, when the clouds had already begun to descend upon her house. Some who had not been present at the dinner wished they had been. And yet all blamed her for giving it. It must, however, have been interesting—as good as a play:

Poor, dear Lady Clapham! she was not one to give in if she could help it. This dinner-party became famous, and Lady Clapham smiling upon her guests, while she must even then have been enduring a dreadful weight of anxiety, was again compared with the Spartan boy of the old classic story:

Mrs. Vanclore had instituted this comparison, and was too proud of it not to repeat it. She was very much to the fore just then. The world is not, however, all ill-natured or hard-hearted, and some commiseration was felt for Lady Clapham. Many of her friends rallied round her, and Mrs. Vanclore, to her credit, be it said, was sorry for her rival in her present misfortunes.

The dowager viscountess' trouble was seriously increased by the dangerous illness of her daughter Geraldine. The girl had clung to her brother so tenaciously on the

night of his arrest, that she had to be taken from him by force, and had been carried to her room in a state of violent hysteria; and since that time had passed from one paroxysm to another with but little intermission.

Lady Clapham had always considered her daughter a mistake. A girl so different from other girls, a girl who fed herself on silly, morbid fancies, who was subject to hysteria and to trances, was no fitting daughter for her, she bitterly reflected. Had she believed in fairies, she might have thought her some uncanny changeling, so little did she resemble, not only her own relatives, but anyone she had ever met.

Geraldine was beautiful; she might have been a comfort to her, and have made a brilliant marriage, instead of being a source of continual anxiety to her, if not of actual shame.

Poor lady, she had some justification for her complaints; but now that her child really seemed to lie between life and death, all the maternal tenderness of which her worldly heart was capable was called into being.

Lady Clapham saw not a single ray of light in the darkness which surrounded her. The marriage upon which, while pretending to simply tolerate it, she had really counted as a means of relieving the embarrassments of the family in some measure, had turned out to be a cause of shame and disgrace—perhaps no marriage at all, and now her son was in a position too dreadful to contemplate.

Well might she think the end of all things was at hand when he, born in the purple, as it were, was forsaken within an hour of his marriage by his, as she esteemed her, plebeian bride, and afterwards accused of murdering some low-born foreigner.

On the night of his arrest, Kenneth had declared in her presence, in the presence of his uncle, and in that of the police officers, his innocence of the crime with which he was charged; but his hesitancy when questioned about Adeliza, his confusion, his strange manner, and his refusal to answer certain queries, had prejudiced even her against him.

A great deal has been said and written about the softening and refining influence of trouble, but sometimes trouble has quite an opposite effect to this.

Beyond the maternal anxiety—and even that was mixed with impatience—her daughter's illness and her son's peril caused her, Lady Clapham was not softened. Her nature was the rather hardened by her

misfortunes. She felt that she did not deserve the calamities which had overtaken her. Why should she be singled out for every poisoned dart an adverse Fate could throw?

Then, again, the world was her idol. In her darkest moments came the thought—what would the world say? She and her children were all ruined for ever. It was not difficult to imagine what the world would say. She knew very well what she would have said, had these things happened to anyone else, and the reflection did not tend to soothe her.

Her elder son was many miles away; nor was he of a nature to help her much, had he been in England. Her brother, Sir Julius, would fain have comforted her, but the office of consoler was not much in his line.

Besides that, he knew not what to say. In his heart he believed his nephew to be guilty of shooting the Frenchman, and the utmost he could hope for was that an enlightened jury would take into consideration the provocation he had received, and bring in a verdict of manslaughter, or, at any rate, allow extenuating circumstances.

He congratulated himself upon keeping clear of matrimony. Women were at the bottom of every mischief under the sun. It was all very well to amuse oneself in a safe way, but wise men should avoid, as they would avoid Satan, serious entanglements. Such were some of his maxims.

The baronet had always liked Kenneth, and he really felt downright sorry for him. If only the boy, having made the first great mistake of wishing to be married at all, had made the confounded Frenchman fight a duel, somewhere in France, perhaps, and then managed to shoot him! Frenchmen did fight duels even now. Unpleasant consequences might have followed; but things would not have been anything like so bad as they were now.

Sir Julius cordially hated anything which interfered with the even tenor of his way, but he was not altogether selfish, and he resolved to stand by his nephew as much as possible at this trying time.

It fell to his lot to arrange for the defence, to see the solicitors, and also to write to his elder nephew, Viscount Clapham, to inform him of what had occurred. This was not a pleasant task. He was not on good terms with the viscount. He considered him a prig, and argued that very little help and sympathy might be expected from that quarter. The worthy baronet had never

been so busy in his life as he was during the time immediately following Kenneth's arrest:

When the news reached the Brunells, Gertrude, kind and unselfish as she was, could not help feeling a great thankfulness. She would have been more than human had she not been relieved to learn that suspicion had been lifted from her lover, even if it were at the cost of her lover's dearest friend. Her sympathetic heart was full of pity for Wilgorton's relatives, and for Wilgorton himself, but she could not help rejoicing on Frederick's account.

It was at the breakfast-table that the news, conveyed through a short paragraph in the morning paper, became known to her. The breakfast party had been a very silent one. Colonel Brunell was annoyed that his friend, Mr. Pike, should have received such cause of offence as to make him quit the house in such a hurried manner on the preceding evening.

By dint of questioning, he had gained from Gertrude a brief account of what had occurred. Even he could not quite blame her for declining Mr. Pike's offer, under existing circumstances; indeed, he went so far as to admit that it was only to be expected. But he was vexed, and he rated her as sharply as if the sudden intrusion of her brother and her lover, at such an inopportune moment, had been expressly arranged by her.

Mrs. Brunell was anxious about her daughter, who sat down to table looking woefully pale and sad. Gertrude had been occupied with her own mournful thoughts. The sons had not yet left their bedrooms, and Agatha was the only one who had anything to say.

Gertrude had opened the paper with trembling hands, and when she saw the paragraph announcing Mr. Wilgorton's arrest, and the probable discharge of Whinstone, her overstrained feelings gave way, and she burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"Gertrude!" said her mother, in surprised remonstrance.

Agatha, as usual, was the first to act. She snatched the paper from her sister's hand, and finding the paragraph herself, triumphantly pointed it out to her father and mother. In the meantime Gertrude had hastily quitted the room. Mrs. Brunell would have immediately followed her, but the colonel prevented her.

"Don't you think she would be better

left alone for a little while?" he said: "I am vexed to see her like that."

Mrs. Brunell acquiesced, as she usually did, and they conversed together for a few minutes upon the new aspect affairs had taken.

"I am very glad, but I hope Gertrude will understand that this does not greatly affect Whinstone's position, so far as we are concerned," said the colonel. "It is not at all desirable that he should come here—for the present, at any rate."

"It is rather hard on them both, isn't it?"

"It will certainly be best, Maria: I was very annoyed indeed with Robert for bringing him here last night."

"You have already said that: It was perhaps thoughtless of Robert, but he meant it kindly."

"It was worse than thoughtless. We ought to endeavour, all of us, to prevent Gertrude's mind from dwelling upon—these unfortunate circumstances, and not bring them forward."

"But——"

"Then, again, we are professing Christians and as such must be consistent, and it would be extremely inconsistent for us to receive under our roof, on the footing he desires, a young man who is—well—in the position Whinstone is in now. I am perfectly aware that I have said this before, but it is no use reminding me of that fact."

"But surely, Caleb, the news we have just heard will make a difference as regards Mr. Whinstone?"

"My dear, you don't seem to understand. It may—I hope it will—make all the difference. But the thing has yet to be gone into—gone into by the proper authorities. I should be sorry indeed for either of these young men to be found deeply implicated. But we must wait and see."

"Poor Gertrude, it is hard!"

"My dear Maria, I must remind you, as you did me just now, that you have said that before. I admit that humanly speaking it may be hard. But we must not rebel against these crosses, which are laid upon us for our good. Had she really been a sensible girl she would never have been subjected to this trial. Children are so headstrong. If she had but waited. I have long had reason to think that Mr. Pike, whose character is so estimable, whose principles are fixed, and whose

connection would be advantageous in every way, admired her."

"Surely you would never wish Gertrude to marry that fright?" put in Agatha the irrepressible. "Bob says—"

"I think you had better leave the room, Agatha. You are too forward with your remarks. How dare you interfere?" interrupted her father severely.

In spite of his injunction, the young lady would have lingered, but Mrs. Brunell gave her an appealing look, at the same time waving her hand towards the door, and she reluctantly obeyed, calling out as she left the room:

"I have only just begun my breakfast, you know, and I am sure I shall be ill."

"It seems to me that Pike had good reason to be offended last night," resumed the colonel. "We had a most interesting conversation in the dining-room—he is very appreciative—he left me for a few minutes, and then he had to rush out of the house without even saying good-night."

"It was an unlucky accident. I respect Mr. Pike—he is worthy of respect—but I think we ought to remember, Caleb, that a young girl cannot see with our eyes. We can scarcely expect it. And I must say Mr. Pike chose a very inopportune time to make proposals to Gertrude. The only excuse for him is that he was not aware of her engagement to Mr. Whinstone."

"Certainly, he was not aware of this—we can scarcely call it an engagement. I have taken care of that. And however a young girl may look at it, it is an honour to her for a man of Mr. Pike's position and character to offer to make her his wife. But the gist of the matter at present is this—even if the charge against Whinstone falls to the ground altogether, as is to be hoped—he and Gertrude must, nevertheless, not see each other for a while, at least."

"I doubt if we shall be able to manage that; or, at any rate, to prevent them from communicating with each other," replied Mrs. Brunell with a sigh, for she foresaw trouble. "Gertrude is a sweet, obedient

child, but she has shown signs of a stronger will lately than I ever expected her to display. And in this matter in particular. She considers herself pledged to Mr. Whinstone, and a feeling of honour as well as affection binds her to him."

"That is nonsense, Maria. Such dreadful and unforeseen circumstances are enough to absolve one from any promise."

"It is very trying altogether. It grieves me to see how pale and wretched she looks."

"What I do is for her good. Both of you ought to know that. And the discipline should be beneficial to her. We have had a striking lesson in the evil resulting from what may be termed godless marriages in the case of Mr. Wilgorton and Miss Fane Capell."

Colonel Brunell was not always very logical.

A little later in the day he was leaving the house to attend one of the numerous religious meetings at which he was a shining light, when he saw one of the maidservants with a letter in her hand. He was one of those men who are always curious about trifles.

"Who is that letter for?" he asked.

"I am going to the post with it for Miss Gertrude, sir," was the answer. "She wants it posted directly."

"I will take it. I shall be passing a letter-box. I daresay you have plenty to do this morning."

The girl hesitated, but he took the letter from her hand, and left the house. Outside he glanced at the superscription. The letter was addressed to "Frederick Whinstone, Esq." An unpleasant look came into the colonel's face. He felt that this was something like defiance, and he did not like to be defied, especially by his own child, whose real welfare he had so much at heart.

He walked slowly towards the pillar-box at the corner of the street, glanced at the envelope again, hesitated, then, putting the missive in his pocket, pursued his way.

(A further exciting instalment of this story will be published next month.)

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